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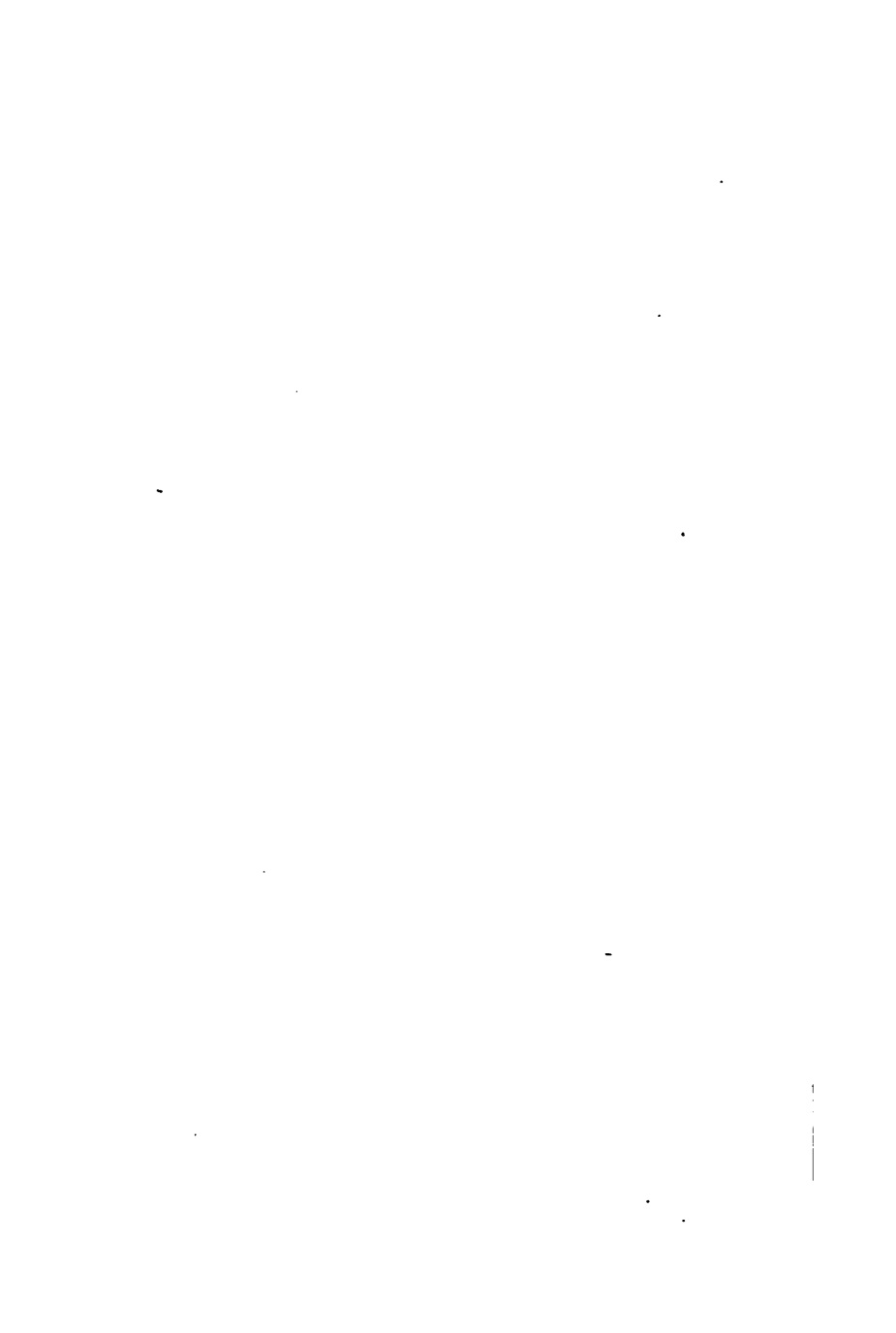


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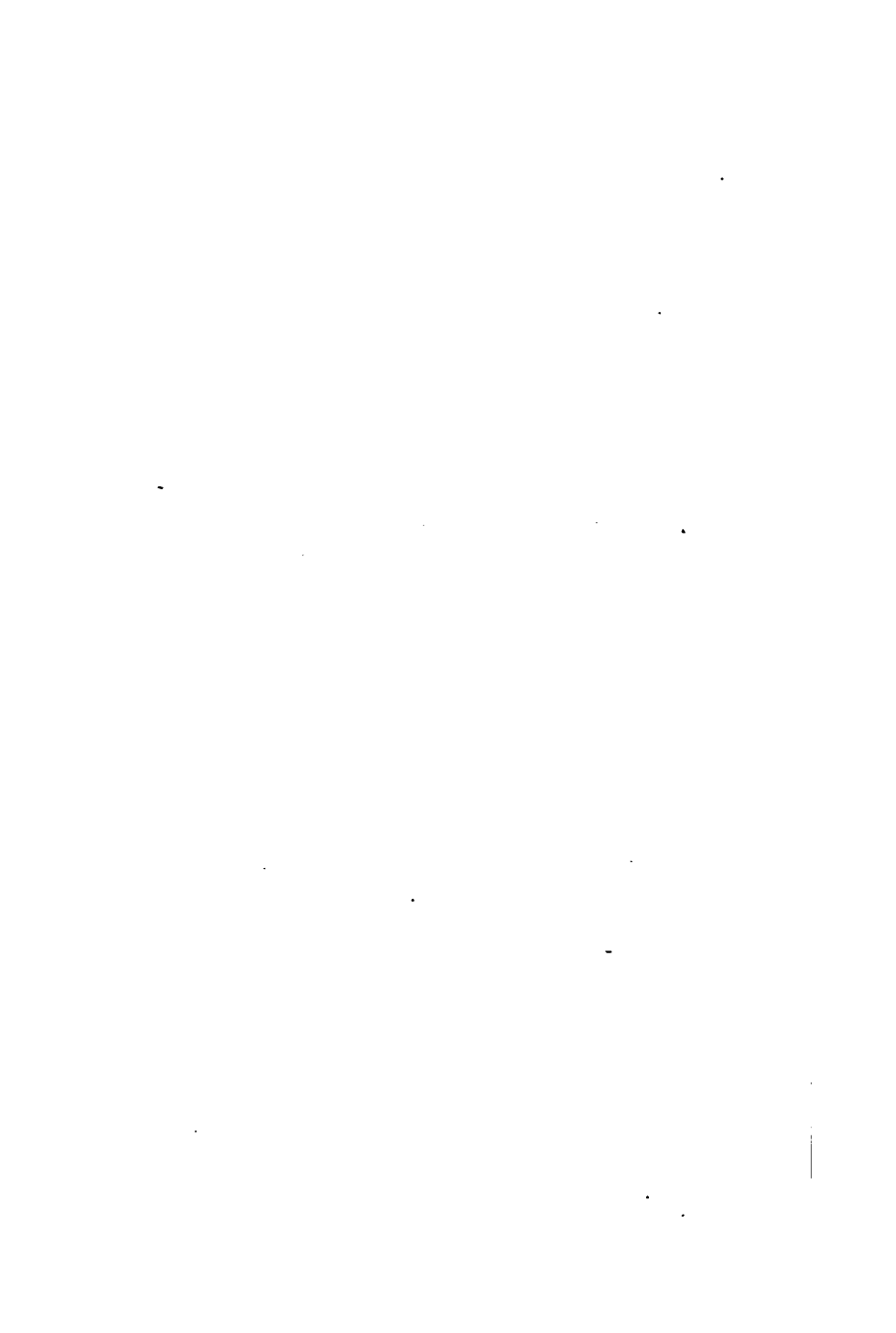
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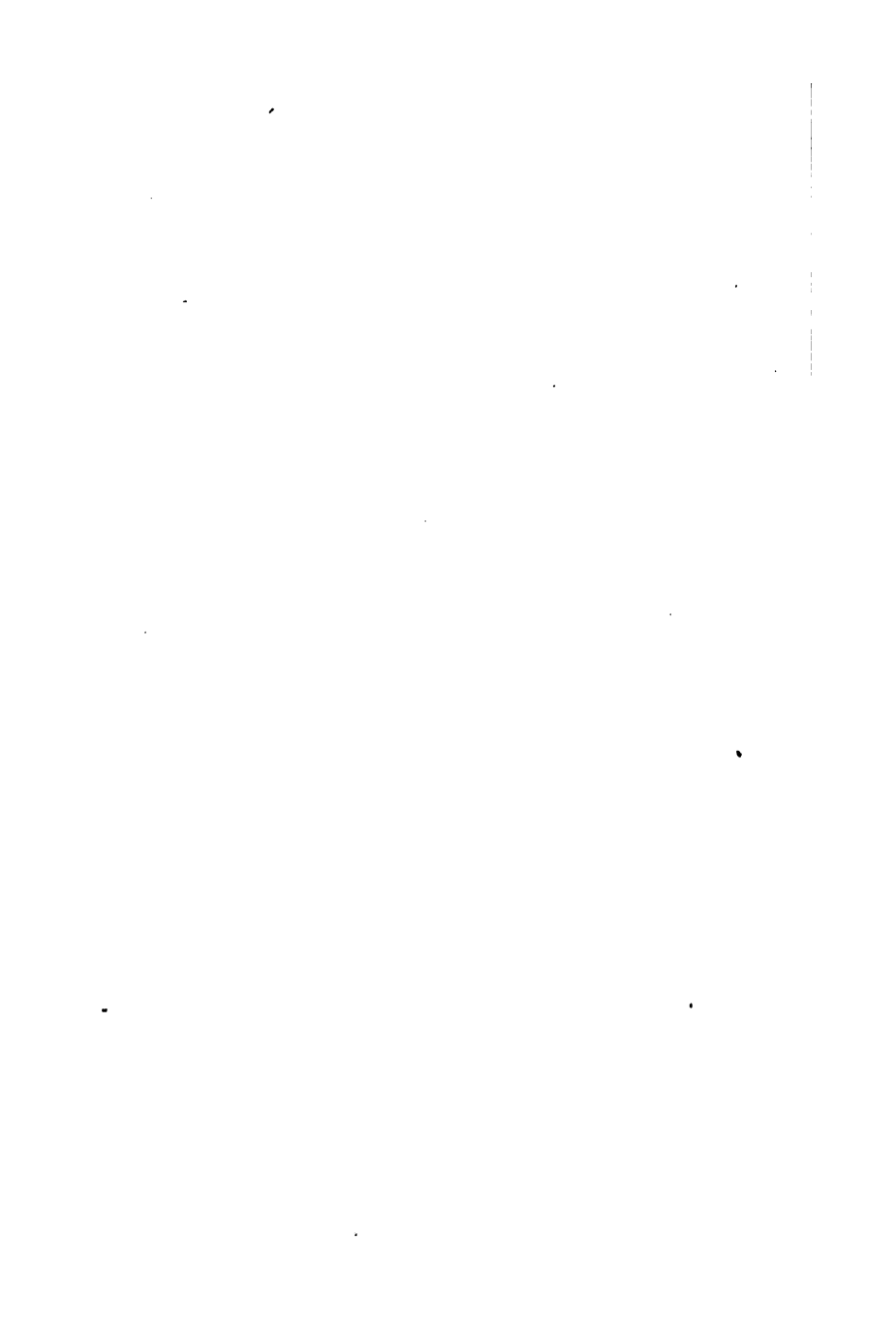




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LUCY WEST;

OR,

THE ORPHANS OF HIGHCLIFF.











Lucy reflecting on the evening's disclosures.

LUCY WEST;  
OR, THE  
ORPHANS OF HIGHCLIFF.



DENHAM COURT.

LONDON:  
FREDERICK WARNE AND CO.,  
BEDFORD STREET, COVENT GARDEN.



LUCY WEST;  
OR,  
THE ORPHANS OF HIGHCLIFF.

BY  
MRS. H. B. PAULL.

"Charity vaunteth not itself."

With Illustrations.



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# LUCY WEST;

OR,

## THE ORPHANS OF HIGHCLIFF.

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### CHAPTER I.

**N**EAR the large bay-window of a nobleman's mansion, more than fifty years ago, sat a young lady at work. She was bending over an embroidery frame, and the colours of her silks were blending in rich harmony, as her well-trained fingers drew them in and out with her needle. She appeared about eighteen years of age, and was dressed in the morning costume then in fashion. The short waist, the narrow skirt, and the close crisp curls in front and on the top of the head, would have rendered her appearance anything but elegant in these days. But there was something in the delicate features and noble bearing of the young lady, which required neither dress nor ornament to prove her high birth. The window stood open, and beyond the lofty terraces,

beautiful gardens, smooth lawns, and thick foliage, the blue waves of a tiny bay glittered and sparkled in the sunshine of a bright May morning. The sweet smell of flowers mingled with the breath of the sea, and the lark carolled his joyous lays over-head, while from bush and tree resounded the full melody of song. Yet to this bird-minstrelsy the young lady was not listening : something more holy demanded her attention. From the songs of His creatures she turned to the words of the Creator Himself : " These all wait upon Thee, and Thou givest them their meat in due season." The young lady was not alone ; but the reader's voice, though low and distinct, had enough of the rich Devonshire brogue in its intonation to prove that she belonged to a more humble position in life than her listener. She finished the Psalm, rose from her low seat by the lady's side, and carefully replaced the Bible among a number of other books which stood in an elegant black cabinet of ebony inlaid with gold.

The girl, as she stood, seemed about fifteen years of age ; and not only in dress but in appearance was she a complete contrast to the young lady at the window. A short, full dress of camlet, a white apron and bib, would have been sufficient to mark the difference ; but to this was added a round rosy face, large dark eyes, and black, smoothly-braided hair, cut short at the back. She was indeed a contrast to the fair-haired, delicate-looking lady, Arabella Denham. The voice, with its silvery tones and educated accent, made the contrast still greater. " Patty," she said, " did you

not tell me you had received a letter from your aunt at Plymouth?"

"Yes, my lady," was the reply; "and she desires her duty to you, my lady, and to say my sister Lucy is quite well. Would you like to read the letter, my lady?" continued Patty, after a moment's hesitation.

"Yes, Patty," said Lady Arabella, "if you like to lend it me."

"Oh, yes, my lady," said Patty, as she thrust her hand into her pocket, and produced the letter.

The young lady took it from her, and then said, "You had better go now, Patty. Mrs. Mason will not like you to lose your time here any longer. I will give you the letter by-and-by, when I have read it."

"Very well, my lady," said Patty. And, with a curtsey, she left the room.

On the landing she was met by Lady Louisa, an elder sister of the young lady to whom we have been introduced. "What are you doing here, Patty?" she asked, in a severe tone.

"Please, my lady," said Patty, curtseying, "I've been reading to Lady Arabella."

"Reading!—what?"

"The Bible, if you please, my lady."

"Oh——" said Lady Louisa, checking the satirical remark which rose to her lips. "Well, go and tell her ladyship, breakfast is ready."

Patty curtseyed, and hastened to obey.

Lady Louisa descended the stairs, and entered the breakfast-room. Her father, the Earl, a gentleman of

noble presence, stood at the window, looking out on the broad lands and elegant pleasure-grounds that surrounded his estate. From this lower window the sea was not visible, but enough that was glorious and beautiful in nature and cultivation still showed itself, and caused him to remark, as his daughter entered the room, "What a pity it seems to leave all this beautiful scenery for smoky London !"

"Oh, but papa," said the young lady, "fancy staying here, moped to death, in the country, and missing all the pleasures and gaiety of London in the season ! Why, everybody would think we were gone mad."

"Greater madness to go, I think," said the Earl, as he turned to the breakfast-table.

"Where is Arabella ?" he asked, as he missed the fair face and gentle expression of his youngest daughter.

"Well, I cannot say," laughed Louisa. "For aught I know, she and that girl Patty are having a prayer-meeting together. I met Patty coming out of her room just now, and she told me she had been reading the Bible to her lady."

"I wish Arabella had a little more dignity and self-respect," said Lady Alice, the Earl's eldest daughter, who was at the head of the table. "She makes too much of that child. It was quite enough to have her in the house, and feed and clothe her, without making her a companion. She has strange, low tastes."

"Yes, and the girl does not profit by the teaching and the trouble she takes with her," added Lady Louisa. "Mason says she is like a little fury when

she's offended. The servants are positively afraid of her; and she stormed and stamped her feet so with passion yesterday, that cook slapped her well. And then, I declare, she threatened to go and tell Arabella."

"Has she, do you think?" inquired her sister.

"I cannot say. Arabella is not likely to tell us if she did."

At this moment the door opened, and, cheerful and bright as a sunbeam, the subject of conversation entered the room.

"Oh, papa, pray forgive me for being so late. I was so much interested in a letter, I was obliged to finish reading it before I came down."

"A letter, eh?" said the Earl, as he returned her kiss. "And who from, pray?"

"La, papa!" said his second daughter, "you need not look so mysterious about it. You don't suppose Arabella has received a love-letter, do you?"

"Well, no—not exactly, my dear," said the Earl, laughing. "She has not been to London yet, to seek a husband, as you have."

The two young ladies made no reply to their father's remark. It was a home-thrust; for they were still unmarried, after three or four seasons of London gaiety. They were well-educated, nice-looking girls; they had all the advantages of wealth and high birth; but they lived only for this world, and thought the whole aim and end of a young lady's existence was to make a rich and suitable marriage. Hitherto, they had looked too high, and failed in their aims.

"Well, Arabella," said her father, "your sisters

need not taunt you any longer about your not having 'come out' yet. I suppose you are ready to join them this time. We shall start to-morrow. What do you say?"

Lady Arabella looked at her father imploringly. "Oh, papa, do let me stay this once! I don't care for London and all the fine doings. And just as the country is beginning to look so beautiful! Besides, Aunt Esther says if I stay she will—she feels too old to enjoy the gaieties of London; and she only offered to go because she thought I was going."

"Very kind of her, I must say," said Lady Alice. "And what are we to do? I should like to know——"

"Aunt Louisa will chaperone you and Alice, I'm quite sure. Oh, papa, say 'yes'—say I may stay!"

The Earl sighed. He would have liked to stay, too; but that was out of the question. He looked at the bright face and the gentle eyes of his youngest daughter, and said, "Well, my dear, you are young enough yet. I don't want to spoil you; but I do not quite like to see you so opposed to all the innocent amusements of life. Besides, you will never get a husband down here among the rustics, unless, indeed, you marry a Methodist parson; which I should say was not at all unlikely, with your outlandish notions."

"Oh, papa!" exclaimed both Arabella's sisters, "don't put such a dreadful thought as that into her head! She is fanatic enough for even that."

"I would not do anything to make papa angry—not for the world!" said the poor girl, as the tears rose in her eyes. She had caught sight of a frown on

her father's face as the probability of such a marriage which he had only spoken of in joke was thus confirmed by her sisters ; and it made her tremble, and resolve inwardly that nothing should tempt her to marry without his unqualified assent.





## CHAPTER II.

**L**ORD DENHAM'S estate, Denham Court, was situated near one of those picturesque towns in the north of Devon which render the scenery of that beautiful county so noted and remarkable. A flat table-land, extending inland for some miles, encircled two-thirds of a small bay, in which rippled or foamed the waters from that part of the Atlantic which is formed by St. George's Channel. It rose abruptly from the shore, supported by rocky cliffs, to a giddy height above the sea. In a cleft of this "rock-bound coast" stood the village ; the houses built one above the other in ledges of rock to the very top. Indeed, from the higher part you might literally look down the chimneys of the houses below you. One principal street, leading from a small landing-place or quay, could only be traversed by foot-passengers : it consisted of flights of steps cut in the rock, varying in number from three to six or seven ; the flat on which each house stood forming a landing-place and rest for the toiler up this singular staircase. A few respectable houses were scattered

here and there ; but the larger proportion consisted of white mud-covered cottages, inhabited by fishermen, whose boats on a summer evening dotted the waters of the bay with their white sails, or looked like a miniature fleet as they bent their course homewards in tiny phalanx and Armada-like curve. We are writing in the past tense ; but as the pretty village of Highcliff was, fifty years ago, so it is now ; its white cottages gleaming out amidst the overshadowing foliage, and appearing from the bay as a nest of white doves safely sheltered beneath the rocks.

Not far from the higher part of the village the beautiful estate of Denham Court covers many miles with its park, kitchen and flower gardens, and rich plantations, extending even to the edge of the cliff, and overshadowing its steep elevations with noble trees or wild brushwood. The sea-coast in some counties, Devonshire more especially, is remarkable for the luxuriant growth which covers the rocky boundaries of the ocean. This is one peculiar feature of the bay on which Highcliff is built. In summer the higher cliffs are covered with verdure, even to the water's edge, giving to the noble curve of waters the appearance of an Italian lake, while the deep blue of a Devonshire sky increases the illusion.

Benjamin West, or " Brave Ben," as he was generally called by his mates, followed the trade of a fisherman. He and his comrades had for years dared the dangers of the sea with unflinching courage ; for the tiny bay could toss its waves at times into surging billows. We may call the occupation humble, and

yet none have been more highly honoured. Our Saviour's first disciples were fishermen, and on the deck of a fishing-boat was performed one of his grandest miracles ; when he rebuked the winds and the waves, and there was a great calm. The dangers that then alarmed the fearful disciples still exist, and it was in one of these terrible storms that the wife of " Brave Ben " lost not only her husband, but her two noble boys at the ages of twelve and sixteen.

One morning about three years before the spring in which our story commences, the sky was cloudy, and the water so calm, that the Highcliff fishermen were only too glad of the opportunity which was offered them for a day and night's fishing. The wind, during the early part of the week, rendered the sea too rough for them to follow their employment, and after it went down, the ground-swell which continued, and the bright sunshine, put all idea of fishing out of the question. This morning, however, with its cloudy sky and still water, drew out every fishing-boat long before sunrise, and when day dawned, the little fleet could be seen far out in the bay, while the men were busily employed throwing out their nets, so soon to be filled with the unwary fish.

" Tom," said " Brave Ben " to his eldest son, a lad of sixteen, as they sat about noon eating their homely dinner of bread and meat, " us'll get hoame before it be dark ; there'll be a tidysquall to-night, when the sun go'th down." -

" Will there, fayther ? " said the youth, looking round at the calm water and the leaden sky.

"Ees sure, lad, the wind's a gone round to nor'ard since twelve o'clock."

"Well, fayther, us ha' got a good haul, so us needn't stay longer. Here come t'other boats, too."

"Ay, to be sure, lad, I told ee so—us sailors knows the signs too well to neglect un."

On came the fleet, carrying full sail, and gradually nearing each other as they made for the land ; but the wind met them as they approached within a mile, and the first gust threatened to capsize them all. But they were prepared for it. Every sail had been reefed, and though broadside over, the boats righted again, while the men allowed them to drop down with the tide, which was nearing the ebb, now and then, however, using the sculls.

"Whatever be Jones a doing of, keeping out there?" cried Ben, as he neared one of the boats.

The man looked back. "He beant never gwine to keep up that sail," he said ; "it'll be tore to ribbons afore long."

"Oh, he's a coming on," said Ben ; "all right—look to yourself, man, here it comes !"

Another heavy squall made the little boats tremble from stem to stern ; there was therefore no time for anything but attention to the management of the fishing-boats. The tide had turned, and the waves of the bay rolled and tossed the tiny barks, as they struggled onward, and one by one reached the shore in safety. Ben and his two sons were within a few hundred yards of the shore, when a cry of alarm rose

from the people, who stood anxiously watching the arrival of the fishing-boats. He could see the wife of Jones wringing her hands, and imploring help for her husband from the bystanders. "Brave Ben" heard the appeal. Steering his boat round without a word, he turned back for his comrade. Against the wind, but with the tide in her favour, the boat danced madly over the foaming waves, as if in haste to get out to sea again.

"Keep her head to the wind!" shouted Ben, as he neared the tossing boat. But Jones seemed paralysed; he sat, with a scull in each hand, motionless.

"Us must take un in tow, fayther," said Tom West. "I wish us had a left Frank to hoame," he added.

"Ees, lad," said his father. "God help us, but I couldn't leave a comrade to die."

Jones's boat, drifting hither and thither by opposing wind and waves, without a hand to steer it or an oar to guide it, was no easy task to take in tow, as Tom proposed. But his father was brave: he leaned over the stem of his own tossing boat, and after several efforts succeeded in fastening his boat-hook in the bow of the boat. Then he and his two sons, drawing it towards him with some difficulty, threw a rope to the half-dead owner, shouting to him to make it fast. He understood enough to do as they told him, too much, alas! for their own safety. Ben and his eldest son now seized the oars, and throwing their whole strength into the work, turned and rowed towards the shore. On came the boats, tossing over the foam-crested waves; while the wind, now blowing

a complete hurricane, seemed to pursue them with pitiless force.

The spectators on shore watched them with suspended breath, for they knew that almost in a direct line, between them and the shore, rose a pointed ridge of rocks, over which the ebbing tide dashed with dangerous power, even in calm weather.

"Keep her to lee'ard!" shouted one; but the howling wind mocked at the sound, as it roared as if in derision. Suddenly the boat swung round, a wave had swept over it, and poor Tom West, fainting and exhausted with the violent efforts he was making, sunk with it into the foaming sea. Almost before his father could miss him, the two boats, so suddenly turned out of their course, dashed on the ridge of rocks and disappeared.

Hours after, when the storm had spent itself, the bodies of "Brave Ben," his two sons, and Jones, for whom he had sacrificed himself and them, were cast on shore, to be mourned and wept by the widows, one of whom had two daughters, and the other a little family of six children, all left destitute. It was the recollection of these six little children that influenced poor Ben in his efforts to save their father.

There is among the poor a readiness to help each other in trouble and poverty, even to the sacrifice of self, which those who have enough and to spare would do well to imitate. But while the inhabitants of Highcliff came forward at once to offer their mites for the help of the widows and orphans, there were those in the neighbourhood not only able but willing to

afford more valuable aid. "Brave Ben" left two children : Patty, twelve years of age ; and her little sister Lucy, four. Added to this, their mother, never very strong, was thrown on a bed of sickness by the shock, from which she never recovered, although she lingered nearly two years afterwards.

Lord Denham had three daughters, as we have already seen, and it is the highest honour to say of one of them, that she was a fearless follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, in those days when to profess religion was at once to incur mockery and ridicule, not only from the world, but from relatives ; and Lady Arabella's sisters did not spare her. But Lord Denham loved his youngest daughter ; he could appreciate the loving gentleness and patience which he saw every day displayed ; and he readily advanced for her all the money she required to carry out her deeds of love and mercy in the village. All the family were ready to help in the sad hour that made Patty's mother a widow ; but more than money did the simple-hearted mourners appreciate the personal sympathy of Lady Arabella Denham. No case of sickness or sorrow ever passed unnoticed or unrelieved by her. She would watch by the sick-bed of the suffering infant ; she would herself tend the paralysed or rheumatic old man or woman, soothing them with kind words, or reading to them from that Book where only can be found real comfort in the hour of need. And this was the mistress with whom Patty West was destined to pass nearly ten years of her life.

On the death of Mrs. West, leaving her two girls

orphans, her husband's unmarried sister travelled from a large town in the south of Devon, to make some arrangement for the children. Patty she considered old enough to go out to service, and therefore at once offered to adopt the little fair-haired Lucy, and bring her up to her own business, as a dress-maker. This was a proposal not to be despised. Even Patty, though she dreaded the separation, rejoiced for her little sister's sake ; and the villagers looked upon Lucy's fortune as made, for Miss West was known to have saved some money. Lady Arabella alone trembled. She saw that this maiden aunt was a worldly-minded woman, only anxious to do her duty to the little orphan, and secure her welfare in the present life : there was no thought for the future. She could, however, turn to the elder child—to Patty—and looking forward with youthful hope and unshrinking faith, "cast her bread upon the waters." Patty should be taken to Denham Court, be trained by the housekeeper to fit her for this life, and she herself would try to follow up the teachings of the pious and Christian mother they had lost. And then, in the future, Lucy, again thrown under her sister's influence, might be brought into the fold at last.

And Lady Arabella well performed her part. Patty became a dependant at Denham Court, and under the training she received became an expert and clever servant. How far the sweet lessons of our holy faith taught by her young mistress sunk into her heart, will be seen in the course of our story.

Lady Arabella gained her point ; she remained at home during that summer season referred to in our first chapter, and well for Patty was it that she did so. She had been intrusted by her mother, on her dying bed, to Lady Esther, her aunt ; and her sisters would say, "No wonder Arabella is a Methodist ; aunt Esther will make her just as bad as herself. Well, there is always one old maid in a family, and that one Arabella is sure to be, if she takes up with such Puritanical notions."

But these very notions were the saving of Patty. During that summer Lady Arabella saw more of her, and discovered how terribly she gave way to a violent, revengeful temper. She talked to her, reasoned with her, prayed for her, and Patty certainly did try to conquer her besetting sin. She was a quick, clever girl ; and not only learned all the housekeeper could teach her, but became so expert in the dairy, that she was placed, while still young, as a servant in that department at Denham Court. At seventeen, Patty was a pleasant-looking, well-behaved, stout, rosy little dairy-maid, not, however, a favourite with her fellow-servants, on account of her hasty temper and haughty assumption of superiority. Lady Arabella had found her an apt pupil in the theory of religion ; she knew the doctrinal parts of Christianity well. She was scrupulous in her conduct, strictly truthful, honest, and industrious. Outwardly it might have been said that Patty "kept all the commandments of the law blameless." She was clean and clever in her duties, warm-hearted and generous in her impulses, but she

lacked one thing—humility. In her pride and self-sufficiency she seemed to fancy she could never do wrong; and her religious training had to a certain extent increased this pride. “Stand by, I am holier than thou,” was the voice of her heart, unknown to herself. Three years passed away, and brought with them great and unexpected changes. Lady Arabella’s two sisters had found what they sought—that is to say, they had obtained husbands, though not in so high a position as they had expected and hoped. “Well, Arabella,” they would say, laughing, “the Methodist parson has not made his appearance yet.” She would laugh at the taunt; but she felt in her heart a deep resolve that without religion she would not accept even the offer of a prince.

Those were sad days in the history of our country. Religious duties and religious professions were mocked at and shunned by the majority. But even then the dawn of that light which shines on England now was quivering in the horizon, and among some of its noblest families might be found the true followers of religion in all its purity. The eldest son of a noble family, whose estate was situated in the same sweet county as his own, met the Earl and his daughters during the London season in that summer which followed our first introduction to Lady Arabella. He was a young man of noble presence and lofty intellect, and had just succeeded to the title and estates of his father.

“Have you not three daughters?” he asked of the

Earl one day, in the presence of the Ladies Alice and Louisa.

"Yes," he replied. "The youngest is at home. She used to be rather delicate, and I have not forced her to London yet."

"Forced her?" replied the Duke, for Duke he was. "I did not know young ladies required any force to get them out into the gaieties of the world."

"Oh," said Lady Alice, laughing, "Arabella is an exception. She thinks these gaieties very wicked—she is a Methodist."

"A Methodist is she? Pray what is that?" asked the Duke.

"Really," said the young lady, "it is quite out of my province to discuss theology, especially with gentlemen."

After this reply the Duke said no more; and in a few days the sisters found he had left town—not, however, without an invitation from the Earl to visit Denham Court in the autumn. At first he felt inclined to excuse himself, but then the recollection of the little "Methodist" who resided there altered his intention. Yes, he would pay the Earl a visit. A real Methodist in an Earl's house was just what he wanted to find. In the autumn he came, and found the little Methodist so charming, that he determined to make her his wife, with the Earl's permission and her own consent.

None could be more surprised than the sisters of Lady Arabella, and some little feeling of envy mixed with the surprise. No one could be more pleased

than the Earl,—yes, and surprised, too. Both he and his daughters had forgotten the text, “Them that honour me, I will honour.”

And how was little Lucy going on, all this while? Lady Arabella often asked herself the question; but she could not interfere with Miss West, who always wrote kindly and fondly to Patty of the child. She resided in the neighbourhood of Plymouth, and had lived in the same house for many years, where she carried on the business of a milliner and dressmaker. Lucy was a delicate little girl; and though her aunt sent her to school, she did not force her to learn, till, as time passed, she seemed to grow stronger. She was even then a great contrast to her sister Patty—fair and gentle, with blue eyes and flaxen hair, and so delicate-looking, that the good-natured Devonshire women at Plymouth would shake their heads, and say, “Ah, she beant long for this world, no fay, her’th a-got her mother’s disorder.” But Lucy grew strong and well; and her aunt, feeling more love for the little orphan child every day, was determined not to send her out into the world, but to keep her at home, and teach her the business. At twelve years old, when she left school, she could read and write well. She had also been taught a little history, geography, and grammar, and had mixed with children above the position which her father had occupied. As yet she had learnt no harm; but Miss West had a horror of what she called being “righteous over much.” She took her little niece to church on Sundays, taught her to say her prayers and her catechism, and that it was

naughty and wicked to tell lies and steal. But there she stopped—that was enough. “As for such fanatics as Lady Arabella Denham, she couldn’t abide ’em. What her ladyship would make of Patty she didn’t know.”

The distance between Denham Court and Plymouth, in those days of no railways, was too great for the sisters to meet often. But on one occasion Miss West brought Lucy to see her sister, and to be present at a great event. Patty was going to be married.





### CHAPTER III.

**I**N the marriage of Lady Arabella—which took place about two years after the spring in which our story commences—Patty accompanied her to Beechwood Park, the seat of the Duke of Ellesmore. She was of too homely a character to be promoted to any high position in the household ; but her cleverness in the dairy, young as she was, made her a very useful servant in that department. She was at this time about seventeen years of age ; but after having filled the situation for nearly four years, she had become so well acquainted with her duties, and was also such a rosy, smart little woman, that no wonder the young farmers in the neighbourhood began to think she would make a very useful, as well as ornamental, wife. Patty, as proud as ever, was very hard to please ; but at last she condescended to encourage the attentions of the son of old farmer Dale.

John Dale's was one of those pleasant-looking, ruddy, sunburnt faces, which is so thoroughly English

that you are attracted to its owner, and inclined to think well of him. He and his eldest brother had for some years managed the old farm, and supported their aged and infirm father, who was now past work. George's wife attended to the dairy ; and he had often said "there was enough to keep 'em both, if John liked to marry." They were men of strict rectitude and high principle, and belonged to the followers of John Wesley—the echoes of whose awakening voice had scarcely died away at the time of which we write.

When the Duke found that John Dale was thinking of Patty—whose history he had heard from his wife—he sent for the young man, questioned him about his future prospects, and finished by promising to give him a pretty little place named Cowslip Farm, about six or seven miles from Beechwood Park, on his marriage. Poor John was almost too much overcome to thank the Duke for such kindness—"Surely the lines had fallen to him in pleasant places !" No wonder that the inhabitants of Lynnford, the little town near, should say, "Well, John, ye bees lucky, sure enough ! The prettiest farm, and the prettiest lass in the county both to once !"

And so, with many presents, and the blessing of her kind and noble master and mistress, Patty went to Lynnford church, to plight her troth to John Dale. Miss West and Lucy were both present. They had been invited to spend a week with Patty at Beechwood, and the journey in the waggon—the only cheap conveyance at that time—had taken four days. Miss West was looked upon by the servants of the house

as a person of some importance, and was received in the housekeeper's room as a visitor to the lady who ruled there. Patty, also, as the future wife of a farmer, was allowed to join them, and John Dale would drop in sometimes, and take a cup of tea with the party. He had no little awe of his future wife's aunt, who, in right of her trade, knew how to make fashionable dresses, although in her own appearance she went rather to the extreme of fashion—which is often the case with under-bred people. To the servants of Beechwood, however, she seemed magnificent, and secured the good-will of the lady's-maid by giving her some hints respecting the form and make of her dress, which were very acceptable. The Duchess—or Lady Arabella, as we like to call her—was exceedingly simple in her own dress; and the gay caps, trimmed gowns, and flying ribbons of the present day would not have been allowed at Beechwood. Indeed, there was much greater distinction then than now between mistress and maid, even among the upper servants in high families. Miss West wanted to remodel some of Patty's dresses, and make them, as she said, "more suitable for a farmer's wife."

"No, indeed," said Patty; "I'm no fine lady. I want none of your finery. Give me a good plain gown and cap, and I shall look what I am. Why, Aunt Lucy, if you were to dress me ever so fine, do you think you could make a lady of me? or do you suppose I should look like one? Not I! and I don't want to. It's very kind of you to offer to alter my dresses," she added, checking herself; "but I thir-

it's sinful to dress too fine—at least, beyond our station. You're living in a great town, and it's your business ; but it's very different for me."

Notwithstanding, however, these little oppositions on Patty's part, that was a very pleasant week. Another dairy-maid had been engaged, so that she had plenty of time to prepare for her wedding, and to spend with her aunt and little sister. The Duke and Duchess had returned from London a few weeks previous to Miss West's arrival, and they won her heart by kindly noticing her and little Lucy, who had grown a very pretty girl, with blue eyes and long golden ringlets, which curled naturally over her neck and shoulders. These curls had been rather a shock to Patty. The preaching of John Wesley, in which he warned his followers "to love not the world, neither the things that are in the world," had carried them to extremes. Truly, in those days it was not a world which a Christian in heart and feeling could love ; but they forgot the words, "Man looketh to the outward appearance, the Lord looketh to the heart."

Plainness and simplicity in dress became very soon the mark of a "Methodist"—as they were called ; and Patty had lately become one of the strictest of this newly-risen sect. Her noble mistress, although a Churchwoman in the highest sense of the term, had too much real knowledge of religion and too little bigotry, to object or find fault with Patty for this. She had been confirmed at fifteen, and Lady Arabella had herself prepared her for the clergyman's class at Highcliff. Perhaps the praise she received by this

gentleman for her correct answers and evident understanding on the subject, did her harm. It encouraged that self-sufficiency and religious pride which, in after years, was the cause of so much sorrow.

She had not many opportunities of being alone with her sister ; but one afternoon she managed to get her out for a pleasant walk.

"Don't take her too far," said Miss West, as she saw Lucy tying her little tastily-trimmed gipsy-hat over the shining curls ; "she is not strong, Patty."

"I won't keep her out long, Aunt Lucy," she replied ; "but there is only one day more ; and to-morrow, you know, we shall be so busy."

With a light and eager step, Lucy tripped out at the servants' entrance, followed by her sister.

"Where shall we go ?" asked Lucy, as she placed her arm in her sister's, and pressed it against her side in a coaxing way. "I'm so glad we can be alone together, and have a long chat."

Patty's warm heart returned the love so fondly offered. She squeezed her sister's arm, and said, "Dear little Lucy, I can't tell you how happy I am to have you here with me. I wish you could stay, and live with us always."

"Oh, I couldn't leave poor aunt now," said Lucy. "She'd break her heart. But, Patty, you mustn't call me 'little.' Why, I'm as tall as you, nearly."

"Yes, dear, I know you are. I'm like father : he was short, and stout, and dark. You're just like poor mother : she was tall and fair. But she didn't we

all these fine curls," said Patty, touching the ringlets tenderly.

"No, I suppose not," said Lucy. "But didn't her hair curl naturally, like mine?"

"Perhaps it might, Lucy ; but she cut it short, and wore a cap."

"Ah ! but then she was a woman, you know, and I'm only a girl."

"I wish you would cut off those curls," said Patty, after a pause. "I don't think they're becoming."

"Not becoming ! Oh, Patty," said her sister, "aunt says, I should look a fright without them ! Oh, she wouldn't have my hair cut for anything, I know !"

"I think those fine curls are all vanity," said Patty. "Besides, you look as if you wanted to be thought a lady's child, with that smart frock and hat ; and you know, Lucy, you're only a poor fisherman's daughter, after all."

"I don't want to be thought a lady's child," said Lucy, pouting. "If I am a poor fisherman's child, I don't see why I shouldn't wear a pretty dress and curls. I like to look nice and pretty," said the child, with more candour than she would have ventured upon had she been a few years older.

"I'm afraid it will make you vain and proud ; and you know pride is wicked, especially pride in clothes," remarked Patty, forgetting the pride of her own heart.

"Well, aunt likes me to dress so," said Lucy ; "and she says you dress like an old dowdy, so I'm sure you can't know much about it. But, Patty dear,

don't let's talk about my dress. Tell me about John Dale's pretty farm, and what it's like. I do wish I could go there now; but it's too far, aunt says, and she must go back the day after the wedding."

Patty sighed. There was honest fear in that sigh. Miss West was not exactly the person to bring up such a pretty, interesting child as her sister Lucy; and Patty, in her way, was equally unsuitable for such a task, although in her pride she thought differently.

Very pretty indeed did Lucy look as she stood at the altar, a day or two after this conversation, as the bridesmaid of her dear sister Patty. Her white dress and blue sash, her gipsy-hat with its wreath of rose-buds and ribbons, were all too fine to please Patty: indeed, as she stood there, with her golden ringlets falling nearly to her waist, she looked more like the child of a nobleman than the orphan daughter of a homely fisherman. Lady Arabella, and indeed the whole household, felt the injudicious kindness of Miss West to the pretty little girl; but the lady was unwilling to interfere. Miss West was acting the part of a mother to the child, and it seemed ingratitude to find fault with her in any way.

After the wedding-breakfast, which was really a dinner, in the servants' hall, Patty and her husband started for his new farm. The sisters clung to each other with fond affection. They alone were left in the world near relatives, and they were to be parted. Patty's tears flowed freely; her religious principles made her aunt's training of Lucy appear all wrong. She had ventured to ask for her to live with them at

Cowslip Farm, but Miss West had replied, in a tone of pain, "Well, Patty, I did not think you would want to take away Lucy just as she's getting such a nice companion to me, and able to be useful. I've got a little bit of money in the bank, and if she stays with me till I die, or if she marries some one I approve of, I shall leave it to her ; but don't you tell her that, I want her to love me without. She doesn't know I'm worth a penny."

After this, Patty could say no more—how could she interfere with such prospects? So, with a sigh, in which there was a great deal of self-righteousness, Patty gave it up. She did not remember, that if deprived of *her* valuable guidance by these insurmountable obstructions, she could still commend her little sister to the care of Him who can bring good out of evil, even when we say, with old Jacob, "All these things are against me."

Miss West and her little niece left Beechwood the day after Patty's wedding. Lucy had been sent for by the Duchess to her dressing-room. Here the noble lady talked to the little girl in her own gentle way respecting her future position with her aunt. She was pleased to find that her education had not been neglected, and that her aunt intended her to learn the dressmaking as a business. There was a gentle yielding nature evident in the character of the child ; and although her dress appeared rather too much for her position, the lady knew that in a town like Plymouth it would not be considered so. The little girl had as yet no personal vanity ; her idea of looking pretty

was merely a love of what is pleasing to the eye. Many young, ay, and old people, too, possess this love ; and, if united with taste, it makes a servant, or those in the humbler class, neat, and a lady elegant, in every costume, and at all hours of the day. The eye that admires "the beautiful" for its own sake will object to a slovenly dress, a collar awry, tangled or untidy hair, or a dirty cap. A glance into a looking-glass is often caused by a very different and a very superior feeling to vanity. The kind mistress of Patty West dismissed her little sister with gentle advice, and a Bible, in which she had written her name, and the words, "I love them that love me, and those that seek me early shall find me." There were tears in Lucy's eyes when she received this gift, and the kind lady's gentle farewell. A time came in the future, when these words, and this Bible, would speak with thunder tones to the heart.

For three or four years all seemed to go smoothly with Miss West and her niece. Lucy was very quick at her needle, and soon acquired great proficiency at her aunt's business. She was not, however, very strong, and the doctor, to whom her aunt once applied respecting her, advised that she should take exercise, and not sit at work too long. Miss West readily agreed to this indulgence. She sometimes walked with Lucy herself ; indeed, this was almost the only way to entice her out, she preferred reading to walking, and story-books were not then exactly suitable for a young girl of such an imaginative character as hers. Miss West had a few old novels,

and other books in her book-case, which Lucy read over and over again. Some few others, still more objectionable, had been lent her by one of her aunt's workwomen, not unknown to her aunt, however, who had very little education herself, and less power of judging respecting the merits of any book. She loved her niece truly ; and, in her great anxiety for her health, would have allowed her every innocent indulgence. She was satisfied to see her happy and absorbed in her book, and not a little proud at the idea of *her* niece having learning enough to be fond of reading anything. At fifteen Lucy went to confirmation. She knew nothing of the answers for which her sister Patty had received such praise from the clergyman at Highcliff. Nor were they required in those days of lukewarmness. She knew her catechism well. Her aunt was known to be a respectable woman in the parish, and supposed to have taught her all that was necessary. Therefore, after a few questions, she obtained her ticket, and henceforth thought only of the pretty white frock and cap, which her aunt was preparing for the occasion. Poor Patty ! she had a letter from Lucy, after it was over, describing the bright sunshine, the beautiful dress of the bishop—the pretty sight, when all the girls in their white dresses moved about the church, and, lastly, the letter contained a full description of her own dress and cap. Patty read it with burning indignation against her aunt ; and, to do her justice, she was shocked at the thoughtless manner in which Lucy had taken these solemn vows upon her. But Lucy went

on her way, unthinking of wrong. Religion like Patty's appeared to her gloomy and melancholy. Sometimes she would talk to her aunt on the subject.

"Aunt, do you think it is necessary to be so precise about religion as Patty is? She thinks it's wicked to wear curls and fine clothes,—you know what a fright she dresses herself. And then you feel almost afraid to laugh or talk before her; and as for theatres, or balls, or cards, oh, aunt! Patty thinks they are so very wicked, and she calls cards the devil's books," added Lucy, in a low voice. "Isn't it dreadful?"

"Who told you all this?" asked Miss West, who had her own doubts about cards, and balls, and theatres. She had heard enough of the evil of these amusements from a sister in London, who, before her death, had written her a letter, telling her things which made her blood run cold. She had her own reasons for not allowing Lucy to learn dancing, or to play cards, or to visit the theatre. We are speaking of these things as they then were; and those who know the history of that time will not deny the fact that fatal consequences often followed indulgence in these worldly pleasures. Lucy knew not the thoughts which passed rapidly through her aunt's mind as she asked, "Who told you all this?"

"Susan, the new dairy-maid," she replied. "She loved fun, and I used to have a good laugh with her sometimes; but if she heard Patty coming, she would say, 'Hush, here comes your sister; her'll be so angry if her hears how I be a laughing with you.'"

No wonder religion appeared to Lucy another name for being miserable, dull, ugly, and quiet.

"Your sister is a very good young woman," said her aunt ; "but you know, Lucy, she's a Methodist, and they're so particular. All you've got to do is to be a good, honest girl, and do your duty in this world, and go to church on Sundays, without all that over-righteousness. I don't think them sort of people are a bit better, for all they make themselves so miserable."

And so the days passed. Miss West was quite unaware of the imaginative, romantic character of her quiet niece, who lived in her own castles in the air, and therefore had no inclination for the realities of life. Laughing and joking with the young men in the neighbourhood were not to her taste. The girls called her proud and vain ; but to do as they did would have been no amusement to her. Her natural refinement shrunk from their boisterous, unmeaning merriment. Miss West thought her in consequence a model of perfection, and often wondered what the young men could be thinking of not to notice her pretty niece more. The fact was, they did not dare. Lucy too plainly showed that any approach to familiarity would be displeasing to her, and she was almost always with her aunt. But this union was not to last for ever. Miss West could not be called an old woman, though she had passed middle age ; far less did Lucy imagine that she was likely to die—the idea had never entered her mind. When, therefore, she was taken from her suddenly, it caused a shock which almost brought on an illness to the poor girl.

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Fortunately, she was not in the work-room when the fit of apoplexy struck her aunt down. Lucy was reading in her room, when one of the workwomen called her hastily.

"Miss Lucy, come here, my dear, quickly! your aunt is ill!" was the startling cry that made Lucy rush from her chair, and throw her book on the floor.

"Oh, let me go in to her!" she exclaimed, as, white and breathless, she stood by the work-room door.

"No, dear, no. There is no one here but me. You could not be left alone with her. You run for the doctor."

Snatching a garden-hat from a peg in the passage, Lucy rushed away through the streets of Plymouth. The young woman who remained behind knew well that help would arrive too late. Already the pallor of death was spreading over the face of the insensible woman. Jane Watson, being several years older than Lucy, felt more fitted to remain in such an hour than a young, delicate girl as Lucy was known to be. Lucy and the doctor returned quickly; his carriage being at the door, he made her get in with him, but they arrived too late, and Lucy awoke to the fact that her dear aunt was dead, and she was alone in the world.

The kind workwoman remained with her; the neighbours were kind and sympathising, but Lucy, after her first burst of sorrow, turned for comfort to her dear sister Patty. She wrote her a letter such as the heart in its grief only can write, and while waiting for a reply, her friends made all necessary arrangements for the funeral. The letter from Patty arrived in the

morning, just before she was going to follow her aunt to the grave, as was the good old custom in those days for women to do. Her aunt's solicitor had paid her one visit already ; he was to accompany her now, and he hinted that he should have to communicate something of importance to her on their return. Lucy had not yet read Patty's letter ; but she entered the parlour with Mr. Henderson at his request, and noted with some little surprise that Jane Watson, the workwoman, was also asked to be present.

"Miss West," said the lawyer, "did you know that your aunt had any money at the bank?"

"Yes, I believe so," she said ; "she always had enough to pay for everything, and I know there must be enough to pay for the funeral," added Lucy, thinking that was why he had asked the question.

"Oh ! I am not thinking of the funeral," he replied. "I have the money for that purpose ; but did she ever say anything to you about her will?"

"No, sir," said Lucy, looking astonished.

"Well, then," he replied, "sit down and I will read it to you."

Poor Lucy, her astonishment increased as she listened, and when she found that all her aunt's possessions, her watch, her rings, and other little articles which she valued, were left to her dear niece, Lucy West, together with 500*l.*, she could contain herself no longer, but bursting into tears, she exclaimed "Oh ! dear, dear Aunt Lucy ! I never loved her half enough ! Oh, how kind she has been to me !"

They let her weep, and after a while she recovered

herself, and was able to read Patty's letter. How eagerly and kindly she and her husband offered her a home with them, and how gently Patty soothed her grief. And Lucy's brightest thoughts, in the midst of her sorrow, were connected with the prospect of her journey to Cowslip Farm, and a home with her sister.

Mr. Henderson managed everything for her; disposed of the furniture, and transferred the money in the bank to her name. He invited her to stay at his house with his wife during the time occupied by these matters; but she preferred remaining at her aunt's house till she left Plymouth. Jane Walton stayed with her, and saw her off early in the morning, by the coach which was expected to arrive at Lynnford about four o'clock in the afternoon.

We will now leave her to travel the pleasant journey through the green lanes and lovely scenery of Devonshire, and take a peep at Cowslip Farm and its inmates.





## CHAPTER IV.

“**W**HAT time does the coach pass the end of the lane, John?” inquired a pleasant, dark-eyed young woman, as her husband entered.

“Four o’clock, or thereabouts. I’ve come in on purpose to make myself a little decent and go to meet it: I shan’t be long.”

“I wish I could go, too; but baby’s so restless;” and she touched the cradle with her foot as the baby, who thus kept its mother a prisoner, fidgeted and whined at finding the rocking had ceased.

“All right, wife, there’s no occasion for you to go: I’ll bring the lassie home safe enough, never fear.”

When John Dale entered the large farm-kitchen a short time after this little talk with his wife, he had replaced the rough out-door working-dress by the homely but carefully kept best suit; and with his fresh, ruddy, sunburnt complexion, blue eyes, and brown hair, he looked a very respectable specimen of a young English farmer.

After he had left, Patty became as restless as her

little one in the cradle. At length she stooped over it, saying, "Come along, then, mother's darling : she shan't be sent to sleep if she doesn't want to ;" and wrapping a shawl round the child, she walked out through the rose-covered porch, and across a rustic bridge, towards the farm-yard gate.

The early June day had been sultry ; but during the afternoon a breeze sprung up which the lowing cattle in an adjoining field seemed fully to appreciate, as they stood patiently by the milkmaid while she filled pail after pail with the rich and wholesome fluid. Patty walked on, and her presence seemed to cause some little commotion to the farm-yard inhabitants, who were assembling near the house in preparation for the hour of roosting. "No, chickies," said Patty ; "I am too busy to give you your supper this evening. Here, Susan !" she called out, as the feathered troop in bustling haste ran and almost flew towards her in every direction, "you must feed the poultry by-and-by : it's too early yet ; but give them a handful of barley now, or they'll follow me to the gate."

The rosy, bare-armed country maiden hastened to obey, and, as the well-known call sounded from the kitchen-door, geese, ducks, chickens, pigeons, deserted their mistress, and scrambled and fluttered back in wild haste at the prospect of supper rather earlier than usual. The baby, in high glee at not being obliged to go to sleep, looked back over her mother's shoulder, and crowed and laughed with delight. Patty walked to the gate, and stood looking into the lane in anxious expectation.

The entrance to John Dale's farm presented at this moment an appearance of rural loveliness in which a painter would have revelled. The house stood back from the road. In front spread a well-kept grass-plot, shaded on the south by two or three noble trees which separated it from the barns and outhouses. A small stream, "so clear," as Miss Jane Taylor's poem says, "one could see the white pebbles below," flowed between the lane and the lawn, and was crossed by a rustic bridge merely for foot-passengers. On one side of the bridge it spread itself into a large pond, over which the willows bent and waved gracefully, while the ducks and geese in proud dignity led their young broods to frolic and sail about, looking like balls of golden down glittering in the sun. The fields, orchards, and gardens surrounding the house did not cover many acres of ground ; but the well-filled barns, the haystacks, the stables and outbuildings, the chicken and pigeon houses, horses, cattle, and dogs, all proved that Cowslip Farm, though small, was well cultivated and highly productive. But to a stranger the house would have been the first object of attraction. The long, low front of three gables, the thatched roof, the antique porch, mullioned windows, and overhanging eaves, were rendered more attractive in appearance by the creeping plants trained over the walls even to the very roof. Roses of every shade, woodbine and honeysuckle, jessamine and clematis, each in their season bloomed in luxuriance and filled the air with their fragrance ; while in winter the monthly roses occupied the places of their more

delicate sisters, and kept up the look of summer all the year round. On the hedgerows and banks skirting the lane grew the May-blossom, the fuchsia, and the wallflower, while the primroses and cowslips seemed to vie with each other in luxuriance and beauty. Altogether Cowslip Farm was a place not to be despised, even though its residents were simple in their habits and homely in their tastes. Patty, as she leaned over the gate, had her back to all these rural sights and sounds, and her thoughts were far away in the past, when she and the young sister whose arrival she so anxiously expected knelt together at their mother's knee. She could see the pale face of that widowed mother bending over them, and hear her sorrowing yet resigned voice praying that the God of the fatherless would protect her children. The sound of the guard's horn, that welcome music of olden times, recalled Patty's thoughts to the present. She listened to the rumbling of approaching wheels; heard them stop at the end of the lane. Then she could distinguish voices, and her heart beat quickly as she recognised the merry girlish tones of her sister.

"Susan," she called out, as the girl with some curiosity lingered within call, "here, take the baby: they're coming." Some few moments' delay occurred in consequence of baby's objection to change nurses. This was accomplished at last, then Patty turned hastily to the gate as John opened it, and exclaiming, "Here's Lucy, wife, all well and safe!"

One earnest look as each sister hesitated to realise the change which five years had occasioned in the

other, and then Lucy flew to the arms open to receive her. A few tears, a little agitated inquiry, one kiss permitted with difficulty by her baby namesake, and then the whole party found their way into the house. In the farm-yard kitchen, near the open door, stood a table laid out for tea, with brown bread, fresh butter, new milk, and thick yellow cream, such as only the extreme West of England can produce. Lucy had travelled fifty miles outside the coach, a journey in those days of not less than six or seven hours. No wonder then that this warm and hospitable greeting filled her with happy hopes for the future. After resting for awhile, and refreshing herself with all the good things so pressingly offered, Patty took Lucy to her room. On entering, Lucy exclaimed, "Oh, how nice! what a sweet place!" and then rushing to the open lattice, she looked out through the roses that peeped in and almost covered it, while tears of delight filled her eyes at the happy home which her sister and her husband had prepared for her.

"Will you go over the house now?" asked Patty.

"Oh, yes: may I?"

"To be sure, my dear: you are at home now." And Patty led the way with a kind of pardonable pride glowing in her looks.

Patty Dale's house was a pattern of neatness. The large kitchen into which we first introduced our readers, occupied more than two-thirds of the front of the house. It formed a living-room for the whole family; for in those primitive days the servants sat at the end of the long table, and took their meals at the same time as

the family, who sat at the head. The floor was a mixture of lime and stone, over which fresh sand was thrown every week. A large open fireplace occupied nearly the whole of one end. A wood fire burnt on the hearth, and from a bar across the wide chimney hung various kettles and "crops," as they are called in Devonshire. So large was the space, that seats literally on each side of the chimney-corner enabled a person to sit in winter and enjoy the comfortable warmth of the burning embers at his feet, without danger or unpleasant heat. Two iron implements called "dogs" stood near to raise and support the fire when required for roasting, and a pair of tongs to pick up smaller pieces which might fall out, a wheel-jack, and a spit for roasting, large and lofty brass candlesticks, bright or black saucepan lids, snuffers, sugar-nippers, an immense pair of bellows, the winding-key for the jack, and various articles used for cooking and kitchen service, now unknown and unnecessary, rested on the high, broad mantel-shelf, or hung on the walls. A large dresser stood opposite the windows, glittering with its bright range of pewter dinner-service; tea-pot, milk-jug, sugar-basin, drinking-cups and mugs, all of the same material. A corner-cupboard with glass doors displayed elegant and antique china and glass, which at the present day would obtain fabulous prices. And prominent before all, stood a silver tea-pot, Patty's wedding-present from her mistress, of whom we have already heard. A table stood near the door, containing a few books—a Bible and book of family prayers occupying the centre; bright tea-trays of

different sizes forming the background as they rested against the wall. The two old-fashioned windows, with their diamond panes, and framework of roses and honeysuckle, required no curtains. Seats of black wood ran round the interior of the oriel-shaped recesses, in one of which stood a plain deal table, holding a work-box and other implements of needle-work ; certainly a most tempting place in which to sit and let the busy fingers sew on, the senses of hearing and smell taking in the sweet sounds and fragrant perfume, encouraging the thoughts as they wandered through the past with saddened regret, or making the pulses beat quickly at bright pictures of the future.

If Patty had been an ordinary farmer's wife, such a home as the farm-kitchen would have satisfied her without thinking of a best parlour ; but her early days had been spent in the midst of wealth, taste, and elegance. No wonder, then, that Lucy uttered sounds of astonished delight when her sister opened the door of the best parlour. It was small compared to the kitchen. A carpet covered the rough floor. A looking-glass, with the heavy gilded frames of those days, graced the mantelpiece. The sofa and chairs were covered with chintz of a neat but cheerful pattern, and curtains of the same hung on each side the windows, the seats of which had cushions to match. Framed prints, representing Scripture stories, ornamented the walls, and a large corner-cupboard of ebony, inlaid with Chinese figures in gold, contained still more precious specimens of old and delicate china. An immense bunch of May-blossom, lilac, and

laburnum, gracefully filled up the wide unoccupied space on the hearth (for there was even here no grate to confine the fire), and on a table in the centre stood a few books.

The bed-rooms, with their white-curtained tent-bedsteads, the snowy quilts, and the boards, scarcely less white, on which the rose-leaves from the open windows lay scattered with utter disregard to the litter they caused, were a treat to Lucy, after residing so long in a close town.

After this inspection of the bed-rooms, Lucy made acquaintance with her two little nephews, Johnny and Frank, one five and the other three. They had looked at her during tea-time with a shy demureness, and submitted to her loving kiss of welcome as children generally do submit to the kiss of a stranger. Quietly they had followed her and their mother from room to room. At last, Patty said, "Come, Lucy, you may as well see the farm-yard, if you are not too tired."

"Oh, no," she replied, "I should like it very much. Johnny and Frank, will you show me all the cows and the pigs?" she continued, taking a hand of each.

The children were delighted. They lost all their shyness, and skipped along by her side with great glee. The dairy, the outhouses, the barns, cowsheds, pigsties—all were visited, and proved to Lucy that her brother-in-law was a farmer of some substance. The hay-makers were about to leave work in one or two adjoining fields, and the smell of the newly-mown hay filled the air with its perfume. Johnny wanted to

tempt his aunt to a roll in the hay, but Patty prevented it. She knew her sister must be tired after so long a journey ; yet Lucy, in her pleasure and excitement, seemed quite ready to join the children in any fun.

"Come and see our rabbits, then," said Johnny. "May she, mother?"

"'Es, tum along," said the little one.

Lucy followed where they pulled her, passing the duck-pond, and turning round towards the back of the house. Here a large mastiff rose to meet them. Lucy drew back.

"He won't bite you—Growler won't bite you!" exclaimed Johnny, running to the dog, and placing his arm round his neck. "Come, and pat him, will 'ee?" he continued, with the Devonshire brogue children so quickly imitate.

"He is very gentle, Lucy," said her sister. "Don't you fear."

Lucy advanced, and, while she patted the dog's head, more to gratify her little nephews than herself, Growler wagged his tail, and seemed quite satisfied with his new acquaintance.

"Come, Johnny," said his mother, "Aunt Lucy can't stay any longer to play with Growler. She is tired now. Take her to see your rabbits, and then we'll go in."

They entered an outhouse, in which were several rabbit-hutches, containing white and brown "bunnies" of all descriptions, large and small, some white and black, some all white, and two or three very handsome and lop-eared.

"They bea'n't all mine," said Johnny: "these be mine." And he led his aunt to a hutch in which were three pretty little white-and-brown rabbits with their mother. They put their noses through the bars of the hutch, and the children gave them a cabbage-leaf. Presently, a peculiar squeaking noise startled Lucy.

"Dere's de guinea-pigs!" said Franky, running to them.

"Oh, what pretty little things!" exclaimed Lucy, as the children took them out of the hutch, to show her.

"Yes," replied her sister, "they're a week old. They're as pretty as this when they're born—not without fur, like rabbits. But put them away, Johnny; your aunt is looking tired; she can see them all to-morrow."

The guinea-pigs were given back to their mother, with a cabbage-leaf to nibble, and then they left the rabbit-house, Lucy remarking, "Well, I am not sorry to leave that place: it does not smell so fresh and sweet as the hay-field."

"No, indeed," laughed Patty.

"Aunt Lucy!" exclaimed Johnny, who by this time had learnt by what name to call the strange lady, "do 'ee come and look at the kittens! Puss has made 'em such a nice bed in the back-kitchen—it's so plum."

"'Soft' he means," said Patty, laughing.

"Oh, I understand," replied Lucy.

"Well, Johnny, where is the 'plum' bed?"

The children pulled their aunt towards the back entrance to the house, and there mamma-puss allowed

her pretty, soft little ones of a fortnight old to be examined and stroked and admired ; walking, at the same time, round the stranger, as if she wished to ascertain whether she might be trusted or not. After this, Patty insisted that they should all return to the house ; and in the window-seat of the large kitchen we will leave the sisters for awhile, to enjoy a pleasant chat about the days that have passed since last they met, at Patty's wedding.





## CHAPTER V.

**L**UCY West retired to her room early on the first evening of her arrival at Cowslip Farm, but not until Patty had assembled her household to the usual Scripture-reading and prayer. It was a custom never omitted, and John gave up the office to his wife as the better reader. It seemed new to Lucy, and Patty's quick eye observed a look of surprise and a want of ease in her manner. No remark was made, however, on either side ; and very soon after, Lucy wished her brother and sister good-night. John and his wife had some little talk about Lucy, and then he said, "Don't you think, Patty, that she's a bit of a fine lady? she seems to me rather dressed up."

Patty hesitated : she was unwilling to judge her sister too hastily ; however, she replied, "Well, John, you know she's a dressmaker, and has learnt how to make her own clothes fashionable ; and then she's such a slight figure, they fit her so well : she's not a fat, clumsy shape, like me."

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"Maybe, wife, you know best ; but she'll never make such a good farmer's wife as you do, my girl."

Patty laughed : "Plenty of time to think about a husband for her, John. Lucy's only just come ; you don't want to get rid of her directly, do you ?"

"No, Patty, no, of course not. No ; 'twas only my thoughts at the moment : I dare say I'm all wrong."

Patty made no reply : she had excused her sister earnestly to her husband to quiet her own misgivings. There was a soft lady-like appearance about Lucy which seemed to create a barrier between the sisters. Lucy's fair and rather pale complexion, the consequence of delicate health, gave her a look of refinement among the ruddy and robust dwellers at the farm. The deep mourning worn for her aunt made the contrast still greater, and as a week passed away Patty became conscious that other and more serious causes existed to make them differ.

Lucy's aunt had certainly been a second mother to her in all that related to her worldly advancement. But of religion as a way of pleasantness she knew nothing : to her it had always a melancholy aspect. Bible-reading was a task, and prayer a mere duty. With all her gentle timidity, and loving, amiable disposition, she possessed no firm principle to guide, no loving Saviour in whom to trust, no Father in heaven to whom she could turn for help and strength in the hour of temptation or danger ; and, worse than all, her eyes were blinded to the fact that she was now entering the great ocean of life like a rudderless ship,

liable to be driven hither and thither with every wind of temptation, and lost at last on the quicksands of despair.

Poor Patty saw it all ; but notwithstanding her Christian experience, she was most unfit in her own strength to guide or even lead her sister to the right path. There was a beam in Patty's own eye which required to be removed before she could see to pull out the mote from her sister's. It was the stumbling-block in Patty's Christian path. She had been trained and instructed by Lady Arabella ; and the kind mistress, although she mourned over this one great fault, believed, and with truth, that the root of the matter was still there. Outwardly, Patty's conduct was irreproachable : every Christian duty, both in public and private, she carefully and even strictly attended to. Against worldly amusements—such as cards, dancing, theatres, fairs, races, &c., as we have heard, she set her face like a flint ; but, with too much confidence in her own determination to do right, she lacked charity to the faults of others. She gloried in some of the qualities she possessed ; amongst others, she had gained a character for firmness, which made it as a Christian grace doubtful. When once she had decided, or given an opinion on any person or subject, nothing could induce her to change. "What I say, I mean, and I never alter : it is so weak-minded to be always changing, and never having the same opinion for two minutes together." Sometimes this spirit took a vindictive form ; but Patty would never own it. "I do forgive," she would say, "but I don't change my

mind. If I say I will not speak to a person again, I mean it ; but that is no proof I have not forgiven." And so, Patty, thinking herself faultless, was severe and uncharitable on the faults of others. How totally unfit to judge her young sister, whose faults were the effects of her education, while Patty at the same time forgot how carefully she had been trained and taught by Lady Arabella ! Trials to prove the strength of their principles were coming to both.

After a few weeks of enjoyment in the wonders and delights of a farm-house, and the country walks in the green lanes and fields, Lucy began to look a little more healthy and rosy, and felt herself quite at home at Cowslip Farm. She had, with a proper spirit of independence, determined, from her first arrival, not to live in idleness at her brother's and sister's expense. When this was mentioned first to John, he raised many objections : he had enough, and to spare ; what difference would Lucy's almost sparrow appetite make to him ? But Patty thought differently. Employment was better than idleness for her sister ; and Lucy had neither strength nor taste for farm-house duties. A little room, hitherto not used, and which opened into the large kitchen, was given up to Lucy for her business. This room required very little furniture to make it a suitable work-room. The lattice-window, with its diamond panes, opened to the lawn, amidst a perfect wilderness of roses ; and here, as the summer passed on, Lucy would sit busily engaged at work. Her quickness and taste soon gained for her plenty of employment in the neighbouring town of Lynnford ;

indeed, she had sometimes to decline work, for she did not wish for more than she could do herself without help. After a time, the families in the neighbourhood offered her employment at their houses, as a resident worker for a few weeks at a time ; but Patty persuaded her to give up the idea.

"There is no occasion for you to work so hard as that, Lucy ; and we would rather have you at home always."

Lucy readily assented, quite unaware that Patty had other reasons for wishing to keep her sister away from the houses of the rich and great. Patty had seen quite enough of the evil that is in the world during her ten years' residence among the aristocracy of those days, and she dreaded its effect on her gentle, innocent sister. She had yet to learn that Lucy knew even more of the worst phases of London and high society than herself.

One evening Patty rather suddenly entered her sister's room, and found Lucy reading. On seeing her sister, Lucy hastily placed the book under some loose articles of dressmaking lying near her on a chair, and took up her work, with a slight colour rising in her cheeks. Patty flushed also, first with surprise that her sister should be reading, and then with sorrow at the evident attempt to conceal. There was no deceit about Patty : the very essence of her character was straightforwardness. "What book were you reading, Lucy?" she asked, abruptly.

"One of those aunt gave me."

"Why did you try to hide it, then?"

"Oh, because I know you disapprove of all books that are not religious ones," she replied, the flush on her cheeks deepening ; "but you may see it if you like : there's nothing wrong in the book." And she took it from the chair, and offered it to her sister.

"Nothing wrong, Lucy !" exclaimed Patty, as she read the title-page. "Nothing wrong ! Oh, Lucy, there is everything wrong in it !"

"Well, aunt did not think so," said Lucy. "She left all her books to me, and they are very valuable."

"Have you any more like this ?" asked Patty.

"Yes, about five or six."

"May I see them ?"

There was a pause ; and then Lucy suddenly rose, exclaiming, "Of course you may : there is nothing to be ashamed of. If my aunt could read them, why may not I ?"

Patty seated herself, and waited in anxious suspense while her sister opened a box, and selecting therefrom four of the novels of that period, placed them on her sister's lap. Patty took them up one by one, read the title and the writer's name, and placed them on the table before her. There was silence for a few minutes, and then Patty said, "Will you think me very unkind, Lucy, if I take these books away, and lock them up out of sight ?"

Lucy flushed. "They are mine," she said, rather haughtily ; and then added, in a tone of indifference, "Well, yes, if you like : I don't care, for I have read them over and over again many times."

"Have *you* read these books ? Oh, Lucy, do you

know that Lady Arabella sent away a very clever lady's-maid because she would persist in reading books like this? Once she lent me one, and you should have heard what my lady said when she found me reading it. She told me it was written by a very clever author, but the wicked acts and words described were not fit for respectable young women to read about. And that book, Lucy, you were reading just now, does it not tell a fine tale about a pretty servant-maid, who was very good, and at last married her master?"

"Yes," said Lucy; "and is that so very wonderful?"

"Oh, my dear sister," said Patty, "don't let such foolish thoughts come into your head! You have not lived in a nobleman's family, as I have, or you would soon see how very different a poor country girl is in all her thoughts and ways to those ladies who are brought up so accomplished and elegant. If she had ever such a pretty face and figure, it would not make her fit to associate with them: she would be miserable. Not even you, dear Lucy—and you are much more like a lady than I am—you couldn't be happy if you married a fine gentleman: his riches and his grandeur would not make you happy."

"I am not thinking about getting married, Patty," said her sister, as if the remark had touched some hidden spring in Lucy's heart.

"No, my dear, of course not; and I hope if you ever do, you will marry a man who fears God and loves his Bible. Oh, Lucy, that's the book to read!

When we love God's book best, all other books seem empty and unsatisfying."

Lucy looked uncomfortable, as she generally did when religious subjects were mentioned. She now said, "Well, Patty, take those books away if you like : I don't care about them, only for aunt's sake. Find me some amusing books amongst yours, and I'll try to read them if it will please you."

Even this poor concession pleased Patty, and she marched off, carrying the prohibited books under her arm with great apparent satisfaction.

Lucy sat working after her sister had left her, but her thoughts were far away. She was trying to recall the stories now lost to her for ever—tales in which she had identified herself with every heroine ; but, above all, arose the longing to see London and its gaieties, which the description of the great city, contained in these books, had so strongly excited. Fifty years ago, London was to the inhabitants of the far west the "Eldorado" of their highest ambition. The writer once heard an old man describe his journey to London from a town in Cornwall. No kind of conveyance could be obtained nearer than Exeter—a distance of sixty miles—except a post-chaise for the rich, and a waggon for those who could not afford such an expense. This waggon occupied three or four days in going over the sixty miles, and the coach from Exeter to London another two days, making altogether about a week to travel a distance which can now be performed in six or eight hours. There were at that time also perils by land, accidents in the

dark, and attacks from highway robbers, to be dreaded. No wonder, therefore, that the old man should add to his account of the journey, "And before I started I made my will." Such was indeed the custom amongst these cautious west countrymen before taking this alarming journey, even with the prospect of seeing the great city whose streets were said to be "paved with gold."

It was from works of fiction and the exaggerated tales of travellers, that the young country people in those days obtained any knowledge of what was going on in the world beyond their own little town or village; and, alas! it was a period when vice and wickedness could walk abroad with bold front, while religion and virtue shrunk from the contact, and remained hidden in obscurity. No wonder the minds of those who could read among the simple villagers became dazzled with the false glare, or corrupted by the evil examples set before them. Stories of men and women who love God, and carry their high religious principles into the world, the business, and the homes of England, were then almost unknown. No little books appeared month after month to gladden the hearts of the little ones, in which they can read sweet stories of boys and girls who have learnt in early life that "wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace."



## CHAPTER VI.

**T**HE summer months rolled by, and Lucy's health appeared much improved by the regular hours and wholesome living of a farm-house. She prospered in her business, and became a bright and cheerful companion to her sister, and playmate to her two little nephews. There had been no reference to the prohibited books: imperceptibly the influence of family religion gave a new turn to the thoughts and tastes of Lucy West, perhaps more openly shown by the absence of that distaste for the hour of Scripture-reading, which had been at first so marked, than in any other way. Lucy also looked over her sister's collection of books, and found one which very much interested her. She had never read John Bunyan's beautiful allegory, the "Pilgrim's Progress," and she now proposed, as the evenings increased in length, to read it aloud, while her sister worked and John sat smoking his pipe, literally in the chimney-corner. These evening readings were a great delight to John:

he was but a poor reader himself, and stopping to spell the words spoiled the sense. Patty, who had been well taught by Lady Arabella, could generally explain the hidden meaning of the quaint old divine, to the great edification of John, who looked upon his wife as a wonder in literary attainments. And so the summer passed away, and September, with its changing foliage, autumnal sky, and adverse winds, gave warning that winter was approaching.

One day Lucy, who had been very busy finishing a dress, stood at the window trying to put the last touches to her work by the fast-fading twilight. The click of the farm-yard gate caused her to look up, and she saw Ellen and Charlotte Spearman, the grocer's daughters, crossing the little bridge in great haste. They espied Lucy at the window, and approaching, made her understand by signs that they wished to come in. Lucy threw open the lattice.

"Come through the kitchen, Emma. Patty is there. Tell her you want to see me : she will understand."

The two girls followed her directions, and were presently seated in the room.

"Wait for a few moments while I finish sewing on this hook," said Lucy, "and then I can talk to you."

"Oh," said Ellen, "you need not talk, only listen : we have lots to tell you."

"What about ?" asked Lucy, indifferently, without turning round.

"Oh, about this gentleman who's come from London, and his——"

"A gentleman! from London! to talk to me about! What do you mean?" And Lucy turned round upon her listeners with a suddenness that made them exclaim,—

"My gracious, Lucy, how you do startle one!"

"Do I?" she exclaimed, sitting down with her back to the window; for she felt the flush which had dyed her cheeks fading away to a deathlike paleness.

"And who is this gentleman? and is 'the lots' you have to tell, about him?"

"Yes, of course it is. Why, Lucy, he's a dancing-master, and he's going to have a class if he can get pupils enough. We are going to learn, and many more; for he only charges a guinea a quarter. Mother says there hasn't been a dancing-master in Lynnford since she was a girl, and she learnt then. Oh, I'm so glad! Sha'n't we enjoy our parties at Christmas when we know how to dance?"

"Are any as old as I am going to learn?" said Lucy, after a pause.

"Oh, yes; and young men too."

"Oh!" exclaimed Lucy, suddenly.

"They're not strangers, Lucy, only young men that you know; our brothers Fred and Tom, and several others in the town; nobody you need mind."

"Ah," thought Lucy, "but Patty would mind!" Then after a pause she asked, "Did you come on purpose to tell me this?"

"Oh no, Lucy; not quite on purpose: we want to please, to alter our lutestring frocks for us, to

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wear on the first evening : it's next Wednesday week. You'll do them in time for us, won't you, Lucy, dear ? We're the first to tell you about it, aren't we ?"

"Yes," said Lucy ; "I haven't heard a word till now, and I'll do your frocks in time, never fear. Have you brought them ?"

"Yes ; here they are."

And the parcel being opened, Lucy listened with forced interest to the varied and earnest directions of what was to be done to make these dresses look as smart as possible ; and then the girls left, delighted at being the first to secure Lucy's well-known taste and skill.

During the next two or three days other visitors followed with similar commissions, until Lucy was obliged to declare she could do no more within the specified time. How busily and quickly her well-trained fingers worked on during that week ! but not the less did the busy brain meditate and ponder on the news she had heard. She could not conceal from herself that to see this London gentleman, and to take lessons in dancing, would be a great pleasure to her. To ask her sister's advice would, she knew, be out of the question. If she went to this class, it must be by stealth. Lucy had found out Patty's loving anxiety for her welfare, and her heart recoiled at the thought of deceiving her. "And yet," she argued, "it would be her own fault if I did. Why should she be so strict ? What harm is there in dancing ? Ladies and gentlemen learnt to dance, that she knew ; and why might not she learn ? Her sister was not her

parent ; and yet it would be so unkind to deceive her." And so the silly girl encouraged the vain thoughts of her heart, and fancied, like the heroines of the tales she had read, that she required no guide to lead her safely through the dangerous path on which she was about to enter. Wednesday evening—that on which the class was to meet for the first time—arrived at last. Patty's baby had been for some days suffering with her teeth, which prevented her noticing Lucy's close attention to business, nor how many young people from the town had called upon her ; or if for a moment it passed through her mind, she recollected the change of season, and the necessity for warmer and autumnal dresses, which would naturally bring Lucy more work than usual. The bare notion of dancing or a dancing-master never entered her head.

Patty sat rocking the cradle in which lay her suffering baby, when Lucy, equipped for walking, passed through the kitchen on that Wednesday evening. She held up her finger as she approached, saying, " Hush !" Lucy advanced on tiptoe, and whispered, " I am going to the Spearmans' with Ellen's dress : you won't mind if I stay to tea, will you ? Some of them will be sure to walk home with me."

" No, of course, dear ; but don't be late," was the kind reply.

The mother was too much absorbed in the welfare of her sick child to look up, or she would have detected the conscious flush that deepened on her sister's face. At any other time Lucy would have

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bent over the cradle of her little niece with anxious sympathy : now she felt ill at ease ; the act of duplicity was new to her. Even at the farm-yard gate she paused and looked back. " Shall I give it up ? " she asked herself. " I do so hate to deceive dear Patty." " Oh, nonsense ! " said the tempter ; " it is her own fault : why is she so strict, so particular, so different to everybody else ? I'm sure Farmer Goodwin, and the Spearmans and Turners, wouldn't let their children learn if it was wrong." And so the die was cast, the first false step taken, and the future of Lucy's life irrevocably fixed.

The town of Lynnford, although it could boast of very little more than one wide principal street, contained a town-hall and market-place, and owned a mayor and corporation. It was situated on the high-road to Exeter, and about a mile from Cowslip Farm. Lights gleamed from the windows of the large room in the town-hall, as Lucy, accompanied by the grocer's daughters, advanced to the entrance. They were almost the first to arrive, yet found the dancing-master there in good spirits ; for his canvass had been so successful as to enable him to engage this large room without fear of loss. As he walks up and down the room with that light, mincing step, and prim elegance of attire, which has from time immemorial made the professor of dancing an object of contempt and ridicule to many of his own sex, we will give our readers a short sketch and description of him. He certainly has a very pleasing, intelligent face ; his eyes are large and dark, and the carefully brushed curls are of raven

blackness. In spite of his profession, there is a manliness about him, perhaps increased by a tall and muscular figure. In fact, his appearance produces a favourable impression, and excites the involuntary remark, "What a pity to make him a dancing-master!" But we are more inclined to pity him because, with all his amiability, his talents, his industry, and good conduct as a son, he had no firmness of principle. Fond of society, courted and flattered by those above him in position for his musical taste and talent, he had the more need of those religious principles which are a young man's only safeguard.

Charles Wilton's father had for many years carried on a respectable day-school near London. His son had, from the age of fifteen, been very useful to him with the junior pupils, his only brother being several years younger than himself, and Mr. Wilton's other children, girls, were both younger than Charles. When quite a little child, Charles Wilton had lived with his grandmother, an old lady, who like the grandmother of Timothy, loved to teach the little one "the Holy Scriptures which were able to make him wise unto salvation." She died when Charles was in his eighth year, and knowing that he would be taken back to London, to a house where real religion was a thing unknown, she prayed earnestly on her death-bed that the boy might never forget the holy lessons she had taught him. Mr. Wilton was an upright, honourable man in his profession, teaching the boys placed under his care to the utmost of his ability, and according to the old-fashioned routine of those days. After school

hours he saw nothing of his pupils, and very little of his children. Nothing fatigues the mind more than teaching, and the monotony of a schoolroom ; therefore, when these were over, he avoided even the society of his own boys, and left them to their own resources. Charles, from the time of his grandmother's death, lived at home, and joined the classes in his father's schoolroom. He had good abilities, and at the age of fifteen, as we have stated, could manage a class of little boys with great cleverness. But he had no pleasure in the employment, it was irksome to him, and as he grew older he longed for freedom to enter on some other means of obtaining a livelihood. Yet what could he do? His education, although good, was not sufficient to enable him to enter any of the professions. His father had not the money to send him to the University, nor to article him to the law ; and the idea of a trade he spurned. Mr. Wilton had educated him in the hope that he would continue the school, first as a partner with himself, and after his death, on his own account ; therefore music, for which he had such great taste, had been neglected, or acquired by stealth merely as an amusement. Perhaps it would have pleased him better than anything else to have followed the profession of a music-master, or to be organist at a church ; but this, with his slight knowledge of it, was out of the question. Next to music, the accomplishment of dancing stood high in his estimation ; he had joined the school class, and very quickly shown his taste for it, in the pliancy and grace of his movements. As his twenty-first birthday

approached, he resolved to throw off the irksome duties of the school-room, and open a dancing-class on his own account. For some time his father opposed his wishes. Charles was useful to him, and Edward not yet sixteen. But this boy had one great advantage over his volatile brother ; he loved the duties, he had a power over the boys and a tact in teaching them, which soon proved to his father that he was capable of being a much greater help than Charles. Mr. Wilton gave way : he assisted his son by recommendation amongst his own connections, and after awhile Charles obtained a very respectable class of dancing-pupils. But Charles Wilton's character was too unsettled to remain long satisfied with any employment. He made the acquaintance of three or four young men as volatile as himself, and, alas ! even more worldly. His love of music led him to musical entertainments, to concerts, to the opera, and the theatres. These places of amusement are not in themselves so objectionable in the present day as at the period of which we write ; at least, to those who know how to avoid the evil and choose the good. Our Saviour prayed for his disciples, not " that they might be taken out of the world, but that they should be kept from the evil." It is when the young and the inexperienced disregard the advice of their elders, and form evil acquaintances with those who are glad to lead them astray ; or when they neglect the duties of life, and spend their whole time in these trifling amusements, that there is danger. Charles Wilton did not actually neglect his duties as a dancing-master,

but all his spare time was spent in these places, and in the company of the young men of whom we have spoken. After two years he suddenly disposed of the connection as a dancing-master, to his father's great annoyance. He said he was tired of London, and wanted to see a little of the world, and that he intended to travel from town to town, and stay for three or six months at each, if able to form a class and pay his expenses.

"Oh, my son," said his father, "with your unsettled disposition, you will always be poor."

What would the old man have said had he known *all* the means at work to make his son poor indeed. Charles had been travelling from town to town now for nearly two years, and his journey to Lynnford was direct from London, where he had spent a few days with his family. He was now about twenty-five, and might be described as a thoughtless, good-natured, worldly young man, living only in the present, and ready to fall into any snare which Satan or the world might throw in his path. Lucy West knew nothing of these hidden characteristics when, with flushed cheeks and an undefined sense of wrong, she stood before him to imitate the first steps of his art. To her inexperienced eyes he was in very truth a living specimen of the London gentleman of whom she had read. To her his exaggerated and ultra-fashionable dress was the perfection of elegance; while the extreme of assumed politeness which so marks his profession appeared the height of polished refinement. And yet she felt ill at ease, and wher

the clock struck eight gladly accepted the escort of some young people going home her road, who offered to accompany her.

John was alone in the kitchen when Lucy entered. "Why, lassie," he exclaimed, "I was just coming out to look for 'ee ! you'm late to-night."

"Yes, John : I stayed at Lynnford. I've been drinking tea at the Spearmans', and some of them came home with me."

"All right, Lucy. Patty's up-stairs with baby. Do you want any supper?"

"No, oh no, thank you, John : I'm going to bed now. I won't go in to Patty, for fear I should disturb baby. Good-night." And Lucy, taking her candle, hastened up-stairs : she wanted to be alone, and every moment John detained her was torture.

Once in her room and the door closed, she could sit and think : but her thoughts were not pleasant. She had satisfied her curiosity : she had seen this London gentleman ; but in her simple opinion he was as far removed from her sphere as those she had read of in the condemned books. Her sister's strong words on the subject recurred to her. The voice of conscience, shame at the necessary concealment, and regret at having deceived her kind, loving sister, were warnings and motives too powerful to be set aside. She determined, and at once, that the dancing-lessons should be given up : of course the money would be lost, but for that she did not care. Patty need not be told of this evening's deception, and it should never be repeated. And quieting her con-

science with this determination, made in her own strength, she was able to sleep in peace, although the flurry and excitement occasioned by this dancing-lesson, made it at first seem almost impossible.





## CHAPTER VII.

**A** WEEK passed—nothing occurred to remind Lucy of the dancing-class, and Patty's mind continued too much occupied with her still suffering baby to notice it, even if anything unusual had resulted in consequence of it. Lucy, in her consciousness of wrong-doing, pleased and gratified her sister by sympathy and kind attention to her little niece. The evening of Wednesday, the day for the second dancing-lesson arrived, but Lucy remained at home. The next day was market-day at Lynnford, and Patty sent the dairy-maid to market, and remained at home with the child. John in the corn-market was not likely to hear anything about dancing or dancing-masters, nor the remarks among the young people respecting Lucy's absence from the second lesson which had taken place the evening before. During the week one or two farmers' wives called in to inquire after the child, but Thursday came again, and Lucy's secret continued safe. A little improvement in the baby's symptoms had taken place on the Tuesday and Wednesday pre-

vious, and after tea on the latter day Lucy felt very restless. This was the third evening of the class. Would her absence be noticed now? Every sound in the garden made her start, and fancy Ellen or Charlotte Spearman was coming to fetch her.

"I wish I had another book," she said at last. "I mean to read about the dear old pilgrim again, but not yet. Baby is sleeping so quietly, I could read to you a little if there was only another book like that one, Patty."

"Well, there is one by the same author, Lucy; another allegory, but a great deal more difficult to understand."

"Oh, never mind that—all the better! What's the book called, and where is it?"

"It is called 'The Holy War.' You'll find it over there on the table—a very old-fashioned book. Lady Arabella told me it was nearly a hundred years old."

"Oh, what a curiosity!" exclaimed Lucy, as she started up, and presently returned with the book in her hand; "and what delightful old pictures!" And she turned over page after page, examining them with amused interest. And certainly the curious dresses of the mailed warriors who formed the armies of Emanuel and Beelzebub, and the quaint, queer attire of the citizens of the town of Mansoul, for the possession of which the rival armies contended, were alone sufficient to excite interest in the book. When John came in, Lucy began to read, but the reading went on slowly. Patty would now and then shake her head at the puzzling questions asked by her hus-

band and sister, and wish for Lady Arabella. However, they got on pretty well ; and in her room that night Lucy said to herself, "I'm glad I did not go this evening. I begin to think there's a battle going on in my heart between good and bad intentions. I've conquered twice, and I mean to conquer again." But Lucy had not yet buckled on her armour. How was she to fight "against principalities and powers and spiritual wickedness in high places?" She had forgotten the command, "Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness, and take the helmet of salvation, the shield of faith, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." Lucy had none of these.

Thursday turned out a complete Devonshire day of pouring, pelting rain. Patty again sent her maid to market, and commissioned her husband to call at the "shop," and bring home a number of articles for house-keeping, of which she gave him a list. Towards four o'clock the rain cleared off a little, and the farmers on horseback, with their wives riding on pillions behind them, took advantage of the opportunity to get home as quickly as possible. John Dale, finding no more business likely to be done, ordered his man to get the horse into the cart, and bring it round to George Spearman's door, while he walked over to get the order made up.

George and his wife and daughters had been very busy during the day in their shop ; but as five o'clock approached, Mrs. Spearman said, "Come, George, you'd better close the door, it's getting cold : there'll

be very few more customers to-night. I'll go into the parlour, and see about tea." She and the girls passed through a small curtained door at the back of the shop as she spoke.

"Seeing about tea" in a Devonshire home is not such a trifling matter as in many London families. Country people in general are noted for their hospitality, and the necessary articles to fill a tea-table in the country, excepting (at the time of which we are writing) tea and sugar, are always good and cheap. This may be said of Devonshire as truly, or perhaps more truly, than of any other county in England, even *now*, when the railroads bring daily to London, in a few hours, fruit, vegetables, fish, butter, cream, poultry, and other productions of this luxuriously fertile country. But in Mrs. Spearman's time railways were unknown, and these things in rich profusion were sold in the market at prices that would seem fabulous to a London housekeeper. They are still cheap in Devonshire, but not as they used to be even twenty years ago.

Mrs. Spearman and the girls very quickly covered the tea-table with home-made bread, fresh butter, new-laid eggs, "scald" or clotted cream, as it is called, and those yellow saffron buns, without which a Devonshire tea-table seldom seems complete. The best china tea-service—thin, delicate, and transparent, now so seldom seen—was neatly arranged in a gaily-coloured tea-tray; while on a side-table stood a dish of cold fowl, with some delicious home-cured country bacon. According to the usual custom among the tradespeople of country

towns on market-days, Mrs. Spearman had prepared her hospitable board at an early hour. Several customers had, as usual, dropped in to refresh themselves with the good cheer offered to them; but the rain, in its pitiless pour, was now thinning the market, and Charlotte remarked to her mother, "I'm sure I don't see any use in laying out such a table, mother. Who'll come now, do you think? Shall I put away the fowl?"

"No, my dear, let it stay a bit. Somebody may come in, and be glad of a cup o' tea and a morsel o' something."

Charlotte little guessed who that "somebody" would be.

After his wife left the shop, on "hospitable thoughts intent," George advanced to close the door, which had been fastened back during the day for the convenience of customers. As he approached, he confronted a gentleman who stood on the step about to enter.

"Servant, sir!" said George, stepping back, and bowing as he held the door open for the visitor to pass in. The elegant dress, so unlike in make and material to the Sunday suits of Lynnford's simple inhabitants; the stylish cloak hanging loosely from his shoulders; and the fashionable air and manners, deceived the honest grocer. He thought it could be none else than a visitor at the Squire's, whose noble mansion could be seen from the brow of the hill on which Lynnford stood. With eager civility he passed behind his counter, and stood waiting the gentleman's pleasure.

"Hem ! Good evening, Mr. Spearman. Your daughters are my pupils at the dancing-class, I believe."

"Oh !" said John, taken aback by the discovery of his mistake. "Well, yes, sir—yes, they are."

"Ah, well—hem ! I daresay they know the names and addresses of most of the young ladies who honour me with their attendance."

"That's very likely," said George, "for I've lived in this place more than thirty years, and my girls were born in this house."

"Oh, indeed ! Well, then, I am sure they will kindly help me, for I am a stranger, and one or two of my pupils being absent, I should like to inquire for them. You understand ?"

"Ah ! respecting their health, and so on ?"

"Yes, sir, of course."

"Do you know the names of the lasses who keep away ?" asked George.

"Not all of them. There is a fair young lady who came the first evening with your daughters, dressed in mourning. She has not been since."

"Oh ! you mean Lucy—Lucy West."

"Yes, yes, that is the name ; I remember now. Can you give me her address ?"

After giving the orders to his man, John walked across the market-place, searching in his pockets for the list given him by Patty. It gave him some little trouble to find, but he succeeded just as he reached Spearman's shop. He was about to enter, but seeing a fine gentleman talking to George, he paused on the

threshold, and heard the latter part of their conversation. Rather startled and surprised, he walked into the shop. The grocer saw him, and turning quickly to his stylish visitor, said, "Perhaps, sir, you'll walk into the parlour: my missis and the girls are just going to tea. They'll be glad to see you, if you'll take a cup with 'em, and they can tell you more about what you want to know than I can."

The invitation was readily accepted; and as George turned to conduct his visitor to the parlour, he looked back to John Dale, saying, "I'll be with you directly, John."

"No hurry, friend," replied the farmer, whose bewilderment at what he had just heard was not a little increased by hearing George Spearman's introduction of this grand gentleman to his little back parlour, and the warm, Devonshire-like welcome with which he was received. George, looking rather conscious, quickly returned, and addressed his customer with the usual salutation:—

"What can I do for you, John?"

"The first thing you can do for me," he replied, "is to tell me the name of that dandy who's making so free with the name of our Lucy."

"What, haven't you heard of him?"

"No, not I! Who be 'ee?" said John, in whose speech the brogue always came out under strong excitement.

"Why, he's a dancing-master, and is teaching the young folks about here to dance."

"Well, but what's he got to do wi' our Lucy?"

"Oh, nothing, of course, only she's one of his pupils."

"One o' his pupils? What! our Lucy a aping the gentry, and learning to cut capers with that jack-o'-dandy? Friend Spearman, if 'twasn't you as told me, I should say 'twas a lie!"

"It's true, though, I can assure ye, John; but I believe she's only been once, and that's the reason he wants to know where she lives."

"He'd best not go up to our farm," said John. "I can tell 'ee, George; my Patty would speak her mind to him straight out, in a way he'd not expect."

"Oh, well, I don't suppose he'll do that," said the grocer, inwardly determining to warn the young man against such a scheme; and then he turned the subject by saying, "Well, but John, can't I do anything for you in the way of business?"

"To be sure! Well, this has been and druv everything out of my head!" He produced his list as he spoke; but before the things were ready, the man arrived with the cart, in which sat Susan, the dairy-maid, and her empty baskets, for Patty's good things seldom returned home from the market. Looking in at the door, the man exclaimed:—

"Maister, beant the things ready? It be ever zo much a past vour!" A few minutes, and then John, seated in his cart, allowed the man to drive home in the usual jog-trot country fashion, while he sat scarcely speaking a word, and thinking with no pleasant anticipation on the news he was carrying home.

In the meantime, Charles Wilton, the dancing-

master, was making himself quite at home in the grocer's little parlour. We know what a hospitable board had been spread for any visitor or relative from the surrounding farm-houses who might chance to drop in; the tea-table, therefore, would have presented attractions to one more fastidious even than Charles Wilton. For some time the pressing invitations to partake of this good cheer rendered the introduction of any other subject impossible. At length, turning to Ellen Spearman, he asked, in a careless way, "Have you seen your friend, Miss West, lately?"

"No," she replied, "not since the first dancing-evening. Her sister's baby was ill last week, so we didn't expect she would be at the class; but I'm sure I can't think why she wasn't there last night."

"Do you suppose she will continue her lessons?" he remarked. "I should be sorry to lose a pupil likely to do me such great credit, for she seemed to take to the steps so readily."

"Oh, yes, I know she did," said Charlotte. "Sarah Jenkins and one or two of the others said they were sure she had learnt dancing before, but I know she hadn't."

"How do you know, my dear?" asked her mother.

"Oh, Lucy told me so herself; and I'm sure she wouldn't tell a story about it."

"Does Miss West reside very far from the town? She may be ill. I think I had better call and inquire."

"I think not, sir," said George Spearman, who at that moment entered from the shop, and took his seat at the tea-table. "Mrs. Dale, her sister, has rather

strict notions : she disapproves of dancing, and such like ; and it would do more harm than good if you saw her, for she's one to speak her mind very plainly when she's put out."

"I suppose she's what is called a Methodist, then?" said Charles.

"Well, sir, yes. She and her husband goes to the Wesleyan chapel down here ; and, for the matter of that, I go there myself sometimes. Their parsons have got a way of waking you up, and making you listen ; and that's more than I can say of our old rector. He's very good and kind to the poor, and all that ; but somehow I always get a good nap when he's preaching."

"More shame for ye then, George," said his wife. "But, sir," addressing Charles Wilton, "I believe them Wesleyans is very good people, although I sticks to my church."

"So does Lucy, mother," observed Ellen. "She always goes to church on Sunday mornings by herself, and with her sister to chapel in the evening."

"Ah, yes, I remember—so she does. You see, sir, Miss West was brought up by her aunt, who taught her dressmaking. She died a few months ago, and left Lucy a good sum of money, I believe ; and now she lives at Cowslip Farm with her sister."

"Cowslip Farm?" he asked. "Is not that a very pretty place down a lane about a mile from Lynnford, on the London road?"

"Yes, sir, it is. You may well say it is pretty : there isn't a prettier farm for miles round."

During this conversation George had been engaged with the good things on the tea-table. He now startled them all by exclaiming, "Do you girls, I don't believe Mrs. Dale knows a word of this dancing business. John was here just now when he heard you, sir, asking about Miss West, and I told him who you were."

"Oh, father! did you tell him about Lucy?" said Ellen, claiming both the girls at once.

"How could I help it, girls? John looked at me I was obliged to tell him."

"Oh, then, Lucy will never come to the dancing class again," said Ellen; "I'm sure of that."

"Miss West is not obliged to obey her sister," said Charles Wilton. "She is old enough, I presume, to do as she pleases."

"Well, I suppose so. Lucy's nearly twenty now, when she's rather timid and delicate-like, and she has no one but her sister. They've been orphans for many years."

"I think you said Miss West has not always lived with her sister?" remarked Charles Wilton.

"Oh, no. It is not more than three months since she came to Cowslip Farm. When their mother died, Lucy was quite a little thing, and her father's death looked her almost directly."

"Did her parents belong to Lynnford?"

"No; they lived at Highcliff, a town about ten miles from here. You should go and see Highcliff. It's a wonderful place to look at."

"I am afraid I shall not have time while I stay."

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"Oh, father! did you tell him about Lucy?" exclaimed both the girls at once.

"How could I help it, girls? John looked so fierce at me I was obliged to tell him."

"Oh, then, Lucy will never come to the dancing-class again," said Ellen; "I'm sure of that."

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"Did her parents belong to Lynnford?"

"No; they lived at Highcliff, a town about twenty miles from here. You should go and see Highcliff, sir. It's a wonderful place to look at."

"I am afraid I shall not have time while I stay in

Devonshire, or I should like to do so," he replied. Then, after a pause, he asked, "Was Mr. West in business?"

"Oh, no; he was only a fisherman, but a very brave one," said George Spearman. And then, with a great deal of earnest truthfulness, he described the terrible occasion in which Brave Ben and his two sons were lost in the storm.

"It's more than twelve years ago, sir," he continued, "since it happened, but I remember it as if it was but t'other day; 'twas the talk of the whole county."

Charles Wilton listened with great interest to this account, and also to Mrs. Spearman and her daughters, whose conversation gave him a great insight into the characters of the two sisters, and the ways and doings at Cowslip Farm. They, in their simple-minded earnestness, represented John as a pattern farmer, and his wife as one of the most clever of women, notwithstanding her quick temper and peculiar opinions. Of Lucy they could not say too much; and they summed up all their remarks about her by saying "that Lucy was too genteel and like a lady to be a dressmaker, and to live in a farm-house."

Charles delighted them all by listening attentively; but at last, after spending more than two hours in the grocer's homely but comfortable parlour, he took his leave with many and sincere thanks, yet perhaps startling them a little by his extreme politeness. They all looked upon him as a wonderful man—so beautifully dressed, so handsome, so polite!

"And not a bit proud!" said Ellen. "I'm sure

he treated us as if we were ladies. And, mother, I think he's taken a fancy to Lucy West. Wouldn't it be just the thing?"

"I'm not so sure, girl," said her father. "Them dancing chaps ain't always steady. Besides, us knows nothing about him."

"But John Dale can find out, of course," said Mrs. Spearman.

"Don't you have nothing to do with it, wife," said George. "And even if he was to take a fancy to Lucy, what do you think Patty would say?"

"She's only her sister—she couldn't stop it."

"No, I suppose not. But, law! it would make her wild, I know."

"Well, I shan't have nought to do with it, George, you may depend. Now, girls, don't you go putting any nonsense into Lucy's head, if she comes to dancing again."

"She won't come again, mother," said Charlotte, "you'll see."

And then George went out to shut up his shop, and the mother and daughters bustled about to make up for lost time, and to prepare for bed.





## CHAPTER VIII.

**A**S John Dale approached the farm, he could see by the light that gleamed and flickered through the windows how pleasant a welcome awaited him in his happy home. Round the bright fire which blazed on the kitchen hearth an immense screen was drawn, enclosing a carpeted space as large as a small parlour; and a table in the centre, laden with good things, presented a very tempting appearance to a hungry traveller. John's rosy little wife and her sister sat within the screen, the latter at work, the former nursing her baby, and watching with delight the lively antics which told of returning health. Notwithstanding this bright picture, John, as he entered, felt very ill at ease. How soon a few words from him would cloud its brightness. The reflection took away his courage, and determined him to put off the evil hour, and enjoy for the present the pleasant evening. Yet it was with an effort that he said at last, as Lucy rose to go to bed—

“Don't go, Lucy, just for a minute; I want you to explain something I've heard of to-day.”

Lucy seated herself with a flushed face and look of surprise. Suddenly there flashed upon her mind a consciousness of what he was about to ask her. Yes, he must have heard all ; and she became deathly pale at the thought. John saw this, and hesitated to speak. Patty looked from one to the other in mute astonishment. At last she spoke.

"What have you heard, John ? Come, out with it, —don't keep me in suspense."

"Why," replied John, slowly, "there was a fine gentleman to-day in George Spearman's shop asking about our Lucy. After he was gone, George told me 'twas a dancing-master, and that Lucy was one of his pupils. All I want to know is whether that's true."

Lucy did not speak ; and as the real meaning of John's question became clear to Patty, she exclaimed, "Nonsense ! impossible ! I don't believe it, John. What ! my sister Lucy figuring away with a dancing-master ! Lucy, why don't you speak up and deny such gossip ?"

Even as she asked this Patty's heart failed her, for Lucy sat covering her face in silence. At last she started up, and throwing herself on her knees before her sister, she clasped her round the waist, and with streaming eyes exclaimed, "Oh, Patty ! dear Patty ! it is all true, but I only went once ; I could not go again because I was obliged to hide it from you. Ellen Spearman told me so many of the girls in Lynnford were going to learn, and I did so wish to join them ; but I only went once."

"That's true," said John ; "Spearman told me this

man wanted Lucy's address that he might find out why she hadn't been to the second lesson."

Patty listened as if in a dream. She would not look down at her sister's weeping face. Her eyes were fixed on vacancy, and her thoughts seemed far away in the past. At last she said, in choking accents, "What! my sister Lucy, who knelt by my side at our mother's knee when we were little ones together—is she so eager for the sinful pleasures of the world as to make her tell lies and deceive? Oh, Lucy, Lucy, that I should ever live to see this day!" And then Patty broke down, and sobbed in bitter disappointment and regret.

Lucy became agonized. "Oh, Patty, do believe me! I never deceived you but once, indeed I did not; I was miserable when I did."

"Miserable!" she replied, "and well you might be. Lucy, when your aunt made you go to the bishop to be confirmed, do you remember the vows you took upon yourself 'to renounce the devil and all his works, and the pomps and vanities of this wicked world'? Oh, will not the mockery of that confirmation rise up in judgment against you at the last day?"

Lucy buried her head in her sister's lap; she could only listen and weep in conscious shame.

At length John could bear it no longer. "Come, wifey, don't be too severe. Lucy says she only went once, and she's given up this dancing nonsense. Come, be friends, you're the only two left to each other in this world; don't ee quarrel like this, pray don't ee."

"I'm not quarrelling, John; I'm grieved—angry—sorry."

"Yes, dear Patty!" exclaimed Lucy, looking up with streaming eyes, "I know you must be grieved and angry; but do forgive me: if you only knew how miserable it made me to deceive you? Oh, I could not do it again; do, do believe me, Patty!"

There was no resisting such pleading and such promises. Patty stooped and lifted her sister from the ground; then throwing her arms round her neck, she exclaimed, "Lucy, I will try to believe you, I will trust you! But oh! my darling sister, if you knew what I have heard from my dear lady of the terrible consequences that often follow to those who love dancing, and balls, and card-tables, you would not be surprised at my anger against them." And then the sisters sat together, and Lucy listened with feelings of humility to the sad accounts her sister had heard from Lady Arabella, till they parted for the night, with the kiss of contrition on one side and sorrowful forgiveness on the other. And when alone in their bedrooms, was there no other forgiveness to ask, no other counsel to implore? Patty knelt as usual; she prayed for her erring sister, prayed that she might have a renewed heart, that her eyes might be opened to see the wickedness of the courses she wished to pursue; but she did not pray that she herself might have wisdom to advise and direct this erring sister in any future temptation that might cross her path. She forgot how little her own manner was calculated "to win souls to Christ." She considered that she had

shown only proper indignation and sorrow at what her sister had done, and quite sufficient relenting in so readily forgiving and trusting her for the future. Should Lucy break her promise she had made up her mind how to act, but a fear of acting injudiciously never entered her head. Self-confidence was the stumbling-block in Patty's religious path.

And in her own room, alone, Lucy also reflected on the evening's disclosures. If the truth must be told, her shame and regret arose more from the act of deception and its discovery than for having joined the dancing-class. She considered her sister prejudiced on this subject, but for the sake of peace she would not continue her lessons. And, after all she had suffered, would anything ever induce her to deceive again? "Oh, no,"—of that she felt quite sure; and in this confidence she also knelt, with a kind of superstitious feeling that a customary repeated prayer could alone make her nightly slumbers safe. But there arose no loving, trusting supplications from a weak child to an all-powerful Father for strength, for wisdom, or for guidance in the future. And so, as do thousands, the sisters slept in peace, unconscious of the rich, untold blessings they had lost for the want of asking.

"Were half the breath so vainly spent,  
To heaven in supplication sent,  
Our cheerful songs would oftener be,  
'Hear what the Lord hath done for me.'"

A week passed, the fourth meeting of the class

arrived, but Lucy expressed no wish to go, nor any disappointment at being absent. Patty felt pleased, and hopeful that after all the dear sister she so loved would learn at last to look upon the pleasures of the world, as only those can look whose hearts are fixed above earth and earthly things. But Lucy had not yet escaped from the consequences of her first false step. The trial was coming upon her in a form very different from any she or her sister had ever dreamt of.

On the day following the fourth dancing-lesson, Lucy—this time without any hidden motive—passed through the kitchen in walking-attire. “I am going with Mrs. Hammond’s dress, sister,” she said, as Patty looked up from her work ; “she wishes me to take it myself in case it should want any alterations, which I can do while I am there.”

“Very well, Lucy, but don’t be late ; the days are drawing in very much, and it is three o’clock now.”

“Oh, I need not stay long ; I’m sure the alterations won’t be much. Good-bye, baby,” she added, as the little one seated on the floor looked up in her face and laughed ; and then she left the house with a lighter step and a greater feeling of satisfaction with herself than she had experienced since the first announcement of the dancing-master’s arrival. She had indeed almost forgotten his existence, when on turning from the lane into the high road he stood before her. The meeting was equally unexpected on his part, and he might have passed on, but for the

conscious blush and look of recognition on Lucy's face.

"Miss West," he exclaimed, "this is a pleasant surprise! I was just on my road intending to call on your sister to inquire for you, as I feared from your absence from the class that you might be ill." And as he spoke he lifted his hat in a style that made her think he was making fun of her.

She roused herself from her sudden surprise, however, on hearing his intention, and blushing still more deeply, began, "My sister, sir, I——" and then she stopped. Could she tell him the reception he was likely to meet with? Could she let him go to the farm and bring up in Patty's mind the old grievance? Had she not better tell him herself? Ah, Lucy, why did you hesitate? Better an angry interview with your sister than that he should turn, as he presently did, to walk with you to Lynnford.

Lucy's hesitation quickly discovered to the young man how much she dreaded his visit to the farm. He therefore said very quietly, in reply to her half-uttered sentence, "Perhaps, Miss West, as I have met you, I need not go on to the farm. You can tell me as we walk whether anything has happened to offend you, or at least why you do not continue your dancing-lessons."

At first Lucy found it difficult to reply; but the young man's manner was so respectful and kind, that she soon recovered herself, and told him exactly the cause of her absence, and her sister's opinions on the subject.

*Lucy West :*

mark on what she told him, but it led  
: questions and kind words to dis-  
elings on the matter, and by the time  
ed the turnpike-gate at the entrance  
: knew more of her real sentiments  
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he left her. Charles Wilton had no  
ake his acquaintance with Lucy West  
gossip in Lynnford just at present,  
he carried a large parcel containing  
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f the lane, and as soon as Lucy passed  
npike she quickened her steps to make

ond, the wife of the surgeon in Lynn-  
a very pretty house quite at the other  
wn. Lucy remembered that this lady  
the dress that evening; it was four  
passed the church, and if many a tera-  
ssary, she would be very much hurried  
ened the door to her.

'est, I'm glad you've come! Missus is  
nd us began to think you wasn't going  
ss home!"

a might be quite sure I would," said  
promised Mrs. Hammond so faith-

ose so; but now come up to missus,  
n fit it on yourself and smarten her  
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Lucy, as with ready fingers she commenced the necessary alterations. But while she worked she recollected with burning cheeks the meeting with the dancing-master, and how she had been led on to talk of her own and her sister's opinions. A kind of instinctive feeling made her determine at once that she would not see him again, she would avoid him, and as for the dancing-lessons they must be for ever discarded. Mrs. Hammond, arrayed in her dressing-gown, seated herself in the easy chair, and watched the quickness and readiness with which Lucy worked. She next noticed her heightened colour. "You look in much better health now than when you came to the Farm, Miss West," she remarked; "you are looking quite rosy this afternoon."

Lucy's colour deepened, but she replied, "I am very well indeed, ma'am, now; my brother and sister are very kind to me."

"I dare say they are, they appear nice people. Presently she remarked, "I hear there is a dancing-master in the town who has taken the large room at the Town Hall for his classes; somebody told me you were one of his pupils, Miss West."

Poor Lucy! she appeared busily occupied with her work, stooping her head to hide the changing colour, and to give her time to recover herself. At last she said, "I have been once, ma'am, but I do not mean to go again—my sister does not approve of it. I think the dress is all right now," she continued, rising,

I glad to change the subject; "are you quite  
ly to put it on?"

"Oh, yes," and Mrs. Hammond rose from her seat, while Lucy hastily fastened the dress, which was now faultless, and then with tasteful fingers arranged the collar and sleeves, and belt and cap, till the lady expressed herself quite satisfied with her own appearance. During these performances the dancing-master was forgotten, and when Mrs. Hammond had put on her bonnet and shawl, and could be considered ready for her visit, Lucy said, timidly, "I cannot do any more for you, ma'am, can I?"

"No thank you, Miss West."

"Then, I'll go, if you please, ma'am; for it will be getting dark soon."

"Of course, so it will; run along, my dear, don't stop for anything more. I am very much pleased with my dress—good-bye."

When Lucy left Mrs. Hammond's, the church clock pointed to half-past five, so that, although she walked at a quick pace, it was nearly dark when she reached the turning to Cowslip Farm. What was her surprise again to meet Charles Wilton! Strange to say, almost his first words were the echo of her own thoughts.

"Oh, Miss West! I have waited here for you, to say just one word. Do you not think it will be as well not to mention to your sister that you have seen me? On my own account I can have no objection," he continued. "I am quite willing to accompany you to the farm even now, and tell my own tale to your sister; but after what you have told me about yourself, do you think it would be wise? I am not presuming to dictate—it is merely a suggestion."

Lucy stood silent, as if bewildered. But he did not need a reply. So he said, at length, "Good evening, Miss West. I beg your pardon if I have startled you. Of course you will know best how to act." He lifted his hat to her once more, and was gone.

Late as it was, Lucy would not hasten home now. She must think and decide what to do. After all her promises and determinations, here was another temptation to conceal. On the one hand, inclination, fear of her sister's anger, and the advice of the young man, urged her to hide the fact of having met him ; on the other, conscience whispered, "Why should you wish to conceal this interview ? Is not your sister your best living friend ? Would not she advise you ? Has not she had more experience than you ? What if she should be right in her opinion of worldly books, worldly pleasures, and worldly people ?" Then again the tempting thought would arise, "Oh, but Patty is too strict, too particular—people call her a Methodist ; and then she has no right to interfere with me—she is only my sister. If she were my mother, it would be different ; I could tell her everything then without being afraid." Ah, Patty, that was the secret ! Had you possessed the parental feeling, which pities while it condemns, and that "perfect love which casteth out fear," Lucy then, or even in days and weeks to come, would have thrown her arms round your neck, and told you all !

This first meeting between the man of the world and the simple, unsuspecting country girl led to results. Two or three times they met at the grocer's

house, and often on market-days during the absence of John and his wife from the farm. Patty suspected nothing. Her sister was loving and gentle at home, entered with seeming interest into the religious readings and other duties, and neither referred to nor regretted her absence from the dancing-class. And yet Lucy could not feel herself a hypocrite. The arguments used by the young man to induce her to meet him clandestinely encouraged the self-deception in which she lived. "Your sister is too strict," he would say; "she knows nothing of the world: if you were to tell her, Lucy, it would make no difference, for she would never consent; and then fancy the miserable home you would have after that, if you still kept up your acquaintance with me: and do you wish to give me up, Lucy?"

Of course there was but one answer to this question, and so the silly girl at last promised to be the wife of a man who did not even make a profession of religion, and of whose principles she had no opportunity of judging, even had she been wise enough or experienced enough to do so. The acquaintance that existed between the two was well known by some in the town and suspected by others, but no one dared to interfere or hint it to either John or his wife. They made mistaken allowances for them on account of Patty's well-known character. The truth came out at last to Patty like the falling of a thunder-bolt.



## CHAPTER IX.

**T** wanted but a few weeks to Christmas Day. One afternoon Lucy proposed to take her little nephews for a walk, and they started at two o'clock in high glee at the prospect of such an unusual treat. It was one of those bright, warm days which so often occur during the winter in the almost Italian climate of Devonshire. Patty sat at work in the enclosure of the window-seat, until the December sun, shining through the leaves, flickered and danced around her, and obliged her to move to the opposite side of the room. The door stood partly open, and the baby, just beginning to walk, crept cautiously from chair to chair, encouraged by her mother's tender words and approving smiles.

Presently a shadow darkened the doorway, and a pleasing voice inquired, "Is Mrs. Dale at home?" Without waiting for a reply the speaker entered, and "Good hat in hand bowing politely. Patty rose and  
ied. With all her experience at Denham  
she could not help mistaking the person

before her for a visitor at the Squire's, or even the Squire himself, whom she knew to be a young man, but had never seen. "Good afternoon, Mrs. Dale," continued the visitor; "I am come to have a little talk with you, if you will allow me."

"Please take a seat, sir," said Patty, still uncertain and bewildered.

"Thank you," he replied, and choosing a chair near the baby, he lifted the little one and placed it on his knee with the action of a person who quite understood the ways of children. "Won't you sit also, Mrs. Dale?" he asked; "I will amuse your baby while we talk;" and he displayed a heavy gold watch-chain and seals, which the rosy, fat fingers clutched with delight. Although the visitor's coolness almost took away Patty's breath, his notice of the child touched the mother's heart, and she sat down in wondering expectation of what his business with her could be. "I dare say you have heard of me, Mrs. Dale," he said, as if he were hurling the words at her in defiance, "I am Charles Wilton, the dancing-master."

Patty at first seemed scarcely to hear the words. She could only look at him as he sat there playing with her child, and holding it as if it were a shield between them. At length the fact realised itself to her mind that her visitor was the dancing-master whose coming had been the cause of Lucy's deceit. Smothering her anger, she replied, "I have heard of you, sir; and pray what is your business with me?"

"Why, Mrs. Dale," he said, "I am come to ask you a favour."

"Ask a favour of me!" she exclaimed. "Sir, do you know my opinion of dancing and dancers?"

"I have heard it is not very favourable," he replied.

"Favourable! I should think not. Why, sir, I consider that men and women who dance are just going the road to destruction faster than their neighbours."

"Very complimentary," he replied, still amusing the child with his watch, his rings, or any other glittering ornament he wore about him.

Spite of the mother's feelings, Patty felt exasperated with the sight of all the finery. She said, almost fiercely,—

"If you expect compliments or favours from me, sir, you are very much mistaken, and I had better tell you so at once; it is wasting your time to remain here." Patty seemed to suppose this would induce him to leave, but he still sat on; and after a pause said, with the same careless good-nature as if nothing could offend him,—

"Why, the truth is, Mrs. Dale, I am going to London in a few weeks, and I wish to take a wife with me." Patty looked at him with dilated eyes. Why had he told her that? what was he going to say next? She rose, and rested her hand on the table. Without noticing the movement he continued, "I have asked your sister, Lucy West, to be my wife, and she has consented; but she made me promise to

come and ask your consent also to our marriage ; she is a kind, loving sister, and will break her heart if you refuse."

Patty had gained breath by this time, although she trembled so as to require the support of the table on which she rested her hands. Every unholy feeling was aroused by the young man's coolness. "Never, sir !" she exclaimed, "never ! I would rather see my sister Lucy in her coffin than the wife of a dancing-master ! I tell you at once that if she persists in this folly I will never forgive her."

"That is not a very Christian-like sentiment," was the worldling's rebuke to the professor of religion. Patty felt it ; she felt conscious that she was not "letting her light shine before men," and yet while this young man remained sitting there so coolly playing with her child she could not command her temper. She advanced towards him.

"Give me the child," she said, stooping and lifting the baby from his knee. "Now, will you please to leave this house, sir ?—you have heard my determination, that, with my consent, Lucy West shall never be your wife, and therefore you need not remain here any longer."

Charles Wilton had made up his mind not to lose his own temper in this interview. He had sought it to satisfy Lucy, quite prepared for a storm, but not for such a very unqualified refusal. He rose, and wished her good afternoon with the same politeness and good humour as if nothing at all unpleasant had been said, and walked out of the house. Patty stood looking

after him, feeling dissatisfied with her visitor, her sister, herself, and all the world.

As Charles Wilton left the farm he met Lucy and the children ; leading her away from them, he in a few words told her the result of his visit. He would not detain her long for fear of increasing Patty's anger, although poor Lucy's heart-broken expressions of sorrow made him unwilling to leave her. She, however, herself hurried him away, and then, avoiding the house, turned towards a field, in which she saw John Dale and some of the men at work. Her only hope rested on him ; if she could gain him over, then Patty might relent. She therefore called him aside, and in a few hasty words told him all. But the open-hearted, high-principled young farmer was much shocked ; he looked grave, he felt displeased ; not all Lucy's excuses about fear of her sister could clear her from the charge of deceit and falsehood. Not all the favourable points she could think of in the character of her intended husband, nor the pleasing accounts of his family at home, could soften matters in his eyes one jot. "No, Lucy," he said, "it won't do. A man who teaches a young woman to deceive, won't ever make a good husband ; with all his good qualities, she'll find herself deceived some day."

"But, John," she pleaded, "I've passed my word to him ; I cannot go back now. Will you see him, and hear what he means to do, and then tell Patty ? she will listen to you. Oh, pray do this for me ; I cannot bear to think of leaving Patty in anger !"

Poor John, he could not resist all this pleading, so

he promised to do as she asked him, but it was a terrible time for the quiet farmer ; he was used to say that anything like a quarrel upset him more than a day's work, and this trial to soften Patty towards her sister was truly hard work for him, more especially as it was useless. She would not listen to a word in Charles Wilton's favour ; and when on the following Sunday she heard that the banns had been read in church, her anger knew no bounds, and Lucy in dismay avoided her presence.

Charles Wilton, notwithstanding Patty's strong prejudices and very decided refusal to approve of her sister's engagement, had told John Dale all about his family and himself, and had to a certain extent removed the good young farmer's fears about his sister-in-law's future happiness. The son of a respectable schoolmaster must have been taught what was right, and be very well educated. True, he was a fine gentleman, and rather gay and frivolous in his manners ; but, reasoned John, "he is a Londoner, and from all I hear tell, Lon'on must be a place to make people dazed, and different to country folks." Then as to his hiding the matter so long. Why, after all, Lucy was not obliged to tell them of her engagement ; she was her own mistress, and they were not her parents. And so, in the unsuspecting innocence of a trusting heart, John received the gay dancing-master for his future brother-in-law, and sanctioned by his presence Lucy's marriage. Perhaps the strongest point in Charles Wilton's favour was his father's letter. Charles had written home, describing

the pretty, interesting girl whom he had met with in Lynnford, and who resided with her brother and sister, and lived in one of the most picturesque farmhouses in Devonshire. He spoke of Lucy as gentle, and amiable, and good, and then added the important information that she had five hundred pounds in the bank, left to her by an aunt who had brought her up. The old gentleman, possessing only the slender and precarious income which a middle-class school at that time could realize, looked upon five hundred pounds as a goodly sum by which, as a capital, his son could make his fortune, and readily gave his consent to the marriage. His letter was read to John Dale by Lucy, as well as a kind, motherly one from Mrs. Wilton to herself, over which she shed tears. But all this made no impression upon Patty ; strong in her prejudices and opinions, she would listen to nothing likely to weaken them, and therefore she refused to look at the letters. Although Patty Dale was mistaken in all this, and blind to the fact that her opposition made matters worse, yet she possessed keen penetration. Something she could not quite explain convinced her that Charles Wilton, even if not really so bad as she judged him from his manner to her in that interview, was still not *all true*. He had taught her sister to conceal : he had something to conceal himself, of that she was quite sure. John laughed at the idea. He had begun to like the young man for his frank, lively, amusing ways, and his evident attachment to Lucy. But Patty was not to be influenced ; and the sisters remained almost estranged from each other.

Three weeks passed away, and the names of Charles Wilton and Lucy West were heard for the third time in church. The unpleasant feeling which existed at Cowslip Farm between the sisters was well known and talked about in Lynnford. George Spearman's family were especially indignant. Charles Wilton had so completely won all their hearts by his lively, good-natured manners and his great sociability; indeed, those who knew him in the town considered it a first-rate match for Lucy, who, they said, looked like a London lady already. If the young man had been proud, or had he appeared to despise the homely country manners of the Devonshire farmers and shopkeepers, who treated him with so much hospitality, the result would have been very different.

"He'th had a good education," said a farmer to the grocer, "and he'th the look of a gentleman, that he hath. Tell'ee what, George, it's a lucky chance for the girl. Patty Dale's a clever body for a farmer's wife, that her be; but her knows nought about what's good for her sister Lucy. Doth her want to make the girl a Methody like hersen?"

"Well, you see," said George, "Lucy's been brought np different to her sister, and then, don't'ee know, there's the five hundred pounds. Seems to me 'tis as lucky for he as for Lucy; he ai'nt rich. Them sort of fine chaps, who teaches and all that, don't earn much of a living—it's poor sort of work, schule-keeping."

"You'm right there, George," said the farmer; 'but it's a foine thing to be a good schollard, for all

that ; and so I wish Lucy and her young man good luck, and you tell'em so, will'ee?"

George readily promised to give the good farmer's message, which he did not forget to do.

Patty's objection to the marriage induced George Spearman to propose that it should take place from his house. Ellen and Charlotte were delighted at the thought, especially as they were to be bridesmaids on the occasion. The week preceding the wedding-day was far from a happy one for Lucy. She only met her sister at meals. Busily engaged at dress-making and millinery for herself, she sat alone in her little room, with no company but her own thoughts, which, it may be said, were engaged in continual and painful conflict. At one moment her heart would yearn towards her sister, and tremble at the reflection that, after all, Patty might be right when she said, "that a young man without real religion was not one to be trusted as a husband. That without perfect truth, and confidence, and high principle, there could be no happiness in a married life." But, then, was it so? Was Charles Wilton really without religion, or principle, or truth? She would not believe it. No, it was Patty's foolish strictness, and because Charles was not a Wesleyan. Besides, she had no right to interfere. And so Lucy would sit at her work, alternately distrusting herself and condemning her sister, until the time came to put on her bonnet and shawl, and trip out across the little bridge to the lane where Charles waited to walk with her to Lynnford. Even-  
? after evening she spent at George Spearman's

cottage ; and there, in the company of Charles, and enjoying the lively talk and warm hospitality of the grocer's family, she forgot all her scruples and her sister's displeasure.

The marriage took place a few days after Christmas Day. John, at Lucy's earnest entreaty, gave her away, and Patty, notwithstanding her continued anger, made no objection to his doing so ; her heart yearned towards her sister, and yet she allowed her to leave the house on the morning of her marriage ; saw from her bedroom-window the weeping face looking up for one farewell glance, but gave it not. True, she turned away and shed bitter tears, but they were hopeless and pitiless tears. She wept over her sister as irrevocably lost, and there mingled not with the future one hope of her return from the sinful career upon which Patty considered she had now entered. Oh, well is it for us, erring and guilty as we are, that "the Lord seeth not as man seeth," and that even to the eleventh hour "he remembereth mercy."





## CHAPTER X.

**A**T the White Horse Cellar, Piccadilly, stood a respectable-looking grey-headed man and a young girl of about two or three-and-twenty. They were plainly but warmly clothed, which indeed was necessary, for a cold wet winter's night in London is not a very pleasant time to be standing in a public street waiting for an arrival. The rain had ceased, however, which was one comfort ; but Ellen Wilton shivered as she stood. " It is almost a pity you came, Ellen," said her father, " on such a night as this."

" Oh," she replied, " I did so wish to see what sort of a girl Charley has chosen. He writes about her as if she were perfection ; but it seems to me very unlikely she should have much refinement, for she is, after all, only a dressmaker living in a farm-house."

Ellen Wilton was by no means an ill-natured girl, although she spoke thus of the unknown sister. She had a gentle, pleasant face, and her dark eyes and hair were as beautiful as her brother's, although she looked chilled and pale with cold, and her teeth

chattered as she spoke. "Charles's new wife has two recommendations for a poor man," said Mr. Wilton; "she has learnt a business, and she has a little money to begin the world with. I hope this marriage will make him steady, at all events. I'm afraid those two friends of his have not done him much good."

"What, Elliot and Parker? Oh, no! I'm afraid not, father," was the reply. "It always made me feel so angry when they came to call for him. They have plenty of money themselves; and how he managed to do as they did without it, I can't think."

"I hope he does not owe them anything, Ellen—what do you think?"

"Oh, I *know* he does not—I asked him. He looked uncomfortable, but he said *no* so firmly, that I'm sure it was true."

Mr. Wilton sighed; he knew that his son's company was eagerly sought by these gay young men, and yet the father's heart felt proud of the notice his son had received, even from such as these. Clever as he might be in training his pupils, he had still been too indulgent to his own son. The guard's horn, announcing the approach of the coach, put an end to the conversation. Steaming with the damp, as well as with their eleven miles' run, the four horses came along at a rapid rate. Charles looked from the coach-window. "Oh!" he exclaimed; "there's my father and Ellen come to meet us!" and the home feeling rose strongly in his bosom as he waved his hand to them. But Lucy shrunk back: she had dreaded meeting his family, and now the moment had

come, she wondered what they would think of her. Lucy had started that morning in a neat dark dress and shawl, and her cottage-bonnet was very pretty and tasteful ; but the appearance of a traveller after a journey of a hundred miles in a coach was very different to that of a passenger who now travels in a first-class railway-carriage, even after riding twice that distance. Charles could afford the inside of a coach for Lucy, who had brought him five hundred pounds. He had made the journey more pleasant, by stopping at Exeter one night, and at Bristol another. So he laughed at her as she exclaimed, " Oh, Charles, I'm not fit to be seen : my face and hands are quite dirty, and as for my dress, look here ! " and she dragged it forward to exhibit the creased condition.

" Oh ! " he replied, laughing, " my father wouldn't notice if you'd got a sack on your head, Lucy ; and Nell's only anxious to kiss her new sister-in-law, I know,—and, here we are ! " he cried, as the coach stopped, and eager hands came forward to open the door.

Charles sprung out, and then helped Lucy. She hardly knew what was happening for the noise and bustle around her ; and the dim oil-lamps scarcely lighting the wet, slimy pavement, were not bright enough to show any imperfections to Ellen Wilton.

" This is my wife, Ellen," said Charles, taking Lucy's hand and leading her towards them.

Ellen Wilton had light enough to see that her new sister had a figure and face she need not be ashamed of, and she kissed her affectionately. They stood still

for a few moments, in obedience to Charles's order. "Take care of Lucy, Nell, while I see to the luggage." Lucy scarcely knew what passed, for boxes were falling on the pavement; men calling to one another, each eagerly pointing out his own luggage; and hackney-coaches clattering up, and their drivers looking out for fares. Poor Lucy! when she at last found herself in a hackney-coach, rumbling over the rough roadway of those days, she could hardly be sure she was right till she heard her husband's voice. "Well, Lucy, here we are in London! what do you think of it?"

"Don't ask her such a question as that now," said his father; "and, my boy, you are forgetting your manners—you have not introduced me to your wife."

"Oh!" said Charles, "I beg Mrs. Wilton's pardon, I am sure. Lucy, dear, this is my father."

Rather confused, Lucy bowed to the old gentleman, whose countenance she could just get a glimpse of as they drove by the street-lamps and the lights in the shop-windows. Her father-in-law took the hand she offered him, and stooped forward and kissed her, saying, "We shall know each other better by-and-by, my dear."

"Oh, yes, I hope so," said Lucy.

The voice was soft and musical, and the Devonshire tone scarcely distinguishable in the few words; not that the tones, which even the educated daughters of this sweet county can never quite conceal, are unpleasant; on the contrary, they make the conversation of a well-educated Devonshire woman most pleasing and attractive, whatever may be the strong Saxon character of the brogue among the humbler classes. Ellen had

not before heard Lucy's voice ; she had been too bewildered to speak ; and now the few simple words were followed by some moments of silence. Each of the strangers made the same inward comment : " That is not the voice of a vulgar or coarse woman."

Charles Wilton was the first to speak as the coach went lumbering on up Bond Street, along Oxford Street, towards Tottenham Court Road : " Where are we going, father?"

" Somewhere up by the New Road, leading to Hampstead," he replied. " I thought it would be better for you not to take your wife into London to live just at first ; and there you will be within a walking distance of the parks and the city."

In those days, gentle reader, there were no omnibuses or cabs to take people from one part of London cheaply and quickly ; the only conveyance was a lumbering hackney-coach, for which the charge was two shillings a mile, and the pace of the horses a very gentle attempt at a trot.

" They are very pretty apartments," said Ellen. " I chose them, and I thought they would be convenient for other places besides the city and the parks. It isn't so very far, you know, from Drury Lane and Covent Garden."

Charles glanced at Lucy, but it was too dark to see the glance ; and even had she seen it she would not have guessed his thoughts. Drury Lane to Lucy would have been a pretty country walk bordered with hedge-rows, and Covent Garden a lovely spot adorned with flower-beds of every description. That his sister

referred to London Theatres never entered her head. At last the carriage stopped before the door of a neat-looking house in a neighbourhood half country, half town ; it looked, could they have seen it by daylight, as all neighbourhoods do look when partly built over and partly overgrown with rank grass. The landlady herself appeared at the door in answer to the coachman's knock. Charles alighted and helped out his sister, who without a pause passed into the house.

" May I go up and see how it looks ? " she asked the landlady.

" Oh, yes, certainly, miss. You'll find it all comfortable, I'm sure."

Away ran Ellen, while Lucy, assisted by her husband and his father, got out of the coach, and stood in the passage of the house, while they removed the boxes and carried them in. This done, Mr. Wilton asked for Ellen,—“ We're not far now, Charles, we can walk home ; so you can dismiss the coach ; I'll pay half,” he continued, taking out his purse.

“ No, no ; get in again, father—where's Ellen ?—you shall ride home. I'll pay the coachman to put you down at your own door ; indeed you shall not walk. I should think not,—after coming to meet us, too,—unless you will come in and have some tea.”

“ No,” said Ellen, who now appeared ; “ mother will be so anxious to hear you have arrived safely, and it's getting late ; besides, Lucy is tired. Good night,” she added, kissing her new sister ; “ and if we *are* to ride, Charley, I've no objection ; ” so saying, she

jumped into the coach and her father followed, not sorry to do so ; for they were still more than a mile from home.

After paying the coachman, Charles looked in at the coach-door and said, in a low voice, " Lucy is tired with her journey to-night,—she's lively enough, I can tell you."

" Oh, don't you apologise for her," said Ellen ; " I have seen quite enough of my new sister to make me feel sure I shall like her. Now go to her, Charley ; don't let her think you can neglect her for us—good night."

" All right, coachman," said he, and away they went. Then he ran back and found Lucy had been taken up-stairs by the landlady ; as soon as they were alone, Lucy said, " Oh, Charles! isn't this pleasant ? and your sister came up just now to see if it was all comfortable ; and the landlady says she must have stirred the fire and lit the candles, to make it look bright, and so it does, doesn't it ?"

" I'm glad my Lucy is pleased," he replied.

And well she might be, for the room, though small, was prettily furnished, and the prettiest set of china tea-things stood on the table, with the china tea-pot then in fashion. There was a pat of fresh butter, a cottage-loaf, some raspberry jam ; and everything on the table looked clean and shining. Presently some one knocked at the door, and a little maid-servant entered with a chamber-candlestick, and said she had taken some hot water into the bed-room.

" Come," said Charles, " there's good news for you,

Lucy; you can wash and be clean, and then we'll have some tea."

Away went Lucy, and presently returned looking fresh and bright, with her glossy curls smoothed and neat. "That's right, now you look like yourself," said Charles. "Now, while you make the tea, I'll go and make myself comfortable, too."

And this was Lucy's first evening in a home which for a few weeks she might call her own. She knew not how to express her happiness. Charles had dreaded London for Lucy after the sweet, fresh air of Cowslip Farm. The sorrow at parting with her sister in anger had made her spirits sink almost to despondency, and the fatigue had increased the feeling; so that it required all her husband's kind attentions and cheerful light-heartedness to rouse her. He had a real affection for the gentle girl who had separated herself from every youthful tie for his sake; and there is something in genuine affection which goes direct to the heart. Now she sat making tea for him, looking the picture of happiness; and it gladdened his heart not the less because his father and sister were evidently pleased with her, although they had had no opportunity to judge her favourably. What would they think of her could they see her now? Perhaps that was the most truly happy evening they had ever spent together; and what bright prospects seemed before them! To Lucy there was not a cloud in her horizon, excepting her sister's anger, and that even seemed forgotten. There was a dark shadow resting on the past which Charles Wilton knew would

some day darken the present ; but he crushed down the recollection of it. Now, when all was so happy and bright, why need he allow a single thought of anything unpleasant to intrude itself ? And so, with the bright happiness of the present, he became so gay and light-hearted, that this happy evening passed away without a cloud.

The sun shone brightly next morning, and a clear, frosty air gave to Lucy a buoyancy of spirits which she had not felt for months.

"Where shall we go first ?" he asked, as Lucy, in her walking-dress, appeared before him.

"Oh !" she exclaimed, "I want to see the Tower, and the wild beasts, and the King's Palace, and St. Paul's, and——"

"Oh, stop, stop, Lucy !" cried Charles. "Why, you don't suppose we can go to all those places in one day ?"

"What ! can't we, Charley ?"

"No, my dear girl. It would take a week to see even these, and there are many other places I should like you to see." He was thinking of the theatres and places of amusement, but he did not wish to shock her prejudices by naming them just yet. Then he continued :—"Do you know how much money it will cost ?"

"Will it, Charley ?" And for a moment there was a disappointed look ; then she exclaimed, eagerly, "Oh ! but never mind that ; you know there's all my five hundred pounds not touched yet. I've never spent a penny of it. John gave me my wedding-

clothes, and it will be so nice to use the first five pounds of it in seeing London. It won't cost more than five pounds, will it?"

"Well, no, darling," said her husband, affectionately. This reference to her money relieved him. He knew that, as her husband, he could claim it all, but had not liked to propose going to the Bank to arrange the matter. So he kissed her, and said, "We'll go wherever you like, Lucy; to St. Paul's first, because I think you will be so pleased with the music and the chanting, and then we shall be close to the Bank, and we can go in, and settle about the money."

"Oh, that will be delightful!" exclaimed Lucy, with all the eagerness of a child about to be taken on a pleasure-excursion.

Charles was soon ready; and then they started to walk down Tottenham Court Road, to the nearest coach-stand. Lucy's five pounds would enable them to afford the expense of a hackney coach now and then, great as it was in those days. Charles Wilton watched his wife's eager eyes as they seemed to look out for wonders in the great city. "I never supposed you would like London so much," he said. "How came you to know so much about it?"

Lucy blushed as she remembered the books which her sister had so condemned; for she almost expected her husband would also consider them unfit for her to read; but she told the truth—"I read about London in books," she replied.

"In books! What—novels, Lucy? Your sister never allowed that," said Charles, "did she?"

"No," said Lucy, while her blushes deepened. "They were aunt's books—I read them at Plymouth. Patty took them away from me, and locked them up."

"Did she though?" said he. "Well, I think that was a great liberty—just as if your aunt didn't know what books you ought to read."

"Oh! but Patty is so particular, you know, Charles," said Lucy. Then she added, "Oh! don't talk about it now: it makes me think of her, and then I shall get miserable."

"Well, we won't," he replied; "and look! here's a coach, and we shall ride through the city, so that you will be able to see all the great places as we pass, without being tired."

During that week the weather continued clear and bright, and though London sights were not certainly such as they are now, there was quite enough to bewilder and astonish the simple country girl. The Tower of London, Exeter Change, the Horse Guards, the Parks, the King's Palace, and the principal streets were noble and grand to her. Perhaps her visits to St. Paul's and Westminster Abbey were the most delightful; and, as she afterwards declared, she should never forget the music of the Cathedral services, which she then heard for the first time.

About half-an-hour after leaving Charles Wilton and his young wife in the Hampstead Road, the coach containing his father and sister stopped at the door of a large, old-fashioned, red-brick house near Pentonville. On a board over the gate appeared the

words, "Academy for Young Gentlemen," and a dim oil-lamp was burning beneath it. The old gentleman and his daughter alighted from the coach, and, although his son had already paid the fare, he placed a shilling in the coachman's hand, saying, "It's a cold night, coachy! There's something to get you a glass of ale."

Very little could be seen of the hackney coachman's face in those days. His great coat had no end of capes—one over the other—each smaller than the one under it. The high, stiff collar rose up round the neck to the ears, and, almost meeting in front, covered the mouth. The hat—really a hat, not a cap or a "wide-awake," as drivers wear now—had a crushed appearance, and was pressed down over the forehead, so that, literally speaking, nothing of the face was visible but the nose. From out of this accumulation of wraps came a voice as if from some fathomless depths—gruff, but kindly. "Thankee, sir! A merry Christmas and a happy new year to you! And you, too, miss, and plenty of 'em!"

Ellen Wilton laughed, and thanked the voice, and then she ran in through the garden to the door, which was now open, followed by her father.

The parlour, though plainly furnished, had a home look about it, which made old Mr. Wilton give a sigh of relief as his youngest son helped him to take off his great-coat. "I'm not so young as I was, wife," he said, as he seated himself in his arm-chair by the comfortable fire; "and this is not a very pleasant night to be riding about London."

The old lady thus addressed had a kind, motherly look as she sat opposite to him, dressed, as old ladies then often dressed, without any ambition to be thought young. She wore a black silk dress, well worn, but still neat-looking ; a white cambric handkerchief pinned across her bosom ; an apron of the same material, and a mob cap meeting under the chin, with a bow of white ribbon on the top. Her own grey hair was carefully smoothed on her temples, but the dark eyes had the same bright sparkle as those of her son Charles. " Did you ride home, my dear ? " she asked ; for to her careful frugality old Mr. Wilton owed his present comfortable though humble position, and the expense of a hackney-coach to Pentonville frightened her.

" Oh, mother ! " exclaimed Ellen, who had taken off her things, and was helping her sister to lay the supper-table—for these homely people kept no servant—" Oh, mother ! Charley paid for it. He wouldn't let us walk home. He said it was so kind of father to come and meet them at the coach-office, and quite a long distance for him to walk ; so he made us ride."

Mrs. Wilton shook her head. " Dear Charley ! It was kind of him, and thoughtful for his father ; but just like his carelessness of money."

" Well, he can spare a few shillings now, I should think," said the other sister, Jane, " out of his wife's five hundred pounds."

To these unpretending people, who could only earn enough to keep them out of debt, and had no money to spare, five hundred pounds seemed a large fortune.

"Five hundred pounds won't last them long," said the old lady, "unless he has a careful, saving wife. What is she like, Ellen?"

"Oh, quite like a lady," she replied; "with such beautiful light flaxen ringlets, and such a soft voice! You wouldn't think she was Devonshire, would you, father?"

"Well, my dear," he replied, "I hardly saw her, and only heard her speak once. I am sure I should not know her again."

"I suppose they will be running about London, sight-seeing; but Charles promised to bring her to-morrow, or the next day, to see you. We shall understand her better then."

But the morrow passed without any signs of a visit from the new-comers. Charles and Lucy had on that day visited the Bank, and made all the necessary arrangements for drawing out the money when required. This occupied the morning. They then went to an hotel, and dined under the shadow of the great dome of St. Paul's. How the vast building awed Lucy! how she hurried her dinner, that they might be in time for the afternoon service! and what a feeling of grandeur overpowered her as she entered, and stood beneath the lofty dome!

Charles, who had an acquaintance among the singers in the choir, had often heard the glorious service here and at Westminster Abbey. He loved music too much to be ever tired of it, and eagerly sought out a good place in the chancel for himself and Lucy. From his acquaintance in the choir, not from that

knowledge of saints' days which is now so general, Charles remembered that about Christmas-time there were two or three great festivals of the Church, on which the music and the anthem would be more carefully chosen than at other times. He had scarcely thought of the fact of its being New Year's Day till he remembered with pleasure, on Lucy's account, that it was one of these festivals, and therefore she would hear some first-rate music.

Poor Lucy ! The tones of the organ and the sweet chanting were sufficiently thrilling to her simple tastes even before the rolling notes of the *Magnificat* and *Nunc Dimittis* overpowered her senses. But when the first treble amongst the boys warbled forth his sweet solo in the anthem, the poor girl's feelings were too strong for her, and tears she could not suppress streamed from her eyes. In this excitement Charles Wilton could sympathise. He understood her ; and he avoided even a glance till the singing was over and the prayers concluded. Then they left the Cathedral together.

" Oh, Charles," said Lucy, " take me home now—I could not bear to see anything more after St. Paul's. Why, it must be like heaven ! "

Charles understood it all. But as they walked home, passing shops and finery, which even then made the great city superior in its merchandise to all others, Lucy recovered herself, and amused her husband by arresting his steps every two or three minutes, to show him some wonder which the shop-windows exhibited.

At breakfast the next morning, Charles proposed that they should walk over to Pentonville, to see his mother. "I did not want her to see my Lucy," he said, "till she was quite recovered from that long journey; and now you are looking as well as ever. You like Ellen, I think; and I'm sure you will like Jane and Edward just as well."

"I do like your sister Ellen," said Lucy. "Besides, how kind she was to get us such nice apartments, and to make them look so comfortable. Oh, Charles, I know I shall like them all, but I'm half afraid of your mother."

"You need not be, then," he replied, "for she's the dearest old lady you ever saw." But as he said this, there arose in his mind a recollection that his mother was one of those clever managers of a house who have no sympathy with silly, helpless women who cannot do as they do, and whom they call "fine ladies." Would his mother so think of Lucy? This was his fear.

But Lucy's gentle, submissive, loving manner to her husband's mother won the old lady's heart, and she very soon felt herself quite at home with them all. The girls had been educated by their father. They could draw and play a little, and had a slight knowledge of French; but they made no pretensions to be anything more than they really were—the daughters of a respectable schoolmaster. Mrs. Wilton had tried to check all attempts at appearing above their station. She was herself the daughter of a poor clergyman, and her husband's father had been a schoolmaster before

him. She dreaded the thought that her children should live beyond their means for the sake of being thought genteel ; but with Charles she had failed. He had mixed with those above him—young men with plenty of money in their pockets, who had been old Mr. Wilton's pupils. She feared it had influenced him for evil, but she did not know how much. He and his wife stayed to dinner, and in the afternoon the old lady questioned Lucy about her past life.

Charles had expected this, and he had told Lucy she might tell his mother everything excepting that her father had been a fisherman, and Patty's objection to the marriage. It was not the first of Lucy's lessons in concealment ; still, it made her uncomfortable.

"Charles tells me you have no parents living," said Mrs. Wilton.

"No, ma'am," said Lucy ; "they died when I was very young. My aunt brought me up."

"Yes, so I heard. But you were living with your sister when Charles met you ?"

"Yes, my sister Patty—Mrs. Dale ; she is a farmer's wife."

"I know, my dear," replied the old lady, pleased at the candid avowal. "And now tell me all about it," she continued.

Poor Lucy ! she blushed and hesitated. How could she tell her own act of deceit, and Patty's anger ?

Mrs. Wilton mistook her reluctance for shyness, and thought she shrunk from talking of herself. "Well, never mind, my dear ; tell me what you're going to do. Have you and Charles decided ?"

"We are going to take a house, and furnish it, and Charles is to have a dancing-class and pupils, and I shall carry on my business, you know. I am a dress-maker," said Lucy, with some pride in the consciousness of being able to add to their income—"I had a great number of customers at Lynnford."

"That's right, my dear; I'm glad to hear you are not above working to help your husband. There's no disgrace in helping—while you're young, especially; and you need not begin in debt, or on credit, for you have a little capital—which is a great advantage to beginners."

"Oh, yes!" said Lucy; "I had five hundred pounds which dear aunt left me, and I never touched it till yesterday. Charley wanted me to see all over London, and so he took out five pounds; but he's got money besides that, to pay our rent and our board. We are going to look for a house after this week."

"That's right, my dear. Don't waste too much time in pleasuring. The holidays will soon pass, and you should have a room for the class quite ready."

"Oh, yes! I know Charles has been talking about it; but I do so want to see London first."

"To be sure you do, child, and there's plenty of time for that, too. I hope you will be a good housewife for your husband," she added.

"I haven't been much used to it," said Lucy, with another blush; "but my sister Patty's house was beautiful. People used to say she was the cleverest manager in the county."

"Ah, well! you have been accustomed to see good

management, so I hope it will all come in time, and you will soon get used to it."

And so, without a word of higher and holier motives than careful frugality and saving habits, Mrs. Wilton advised her young daughter-in-law, forgetting the words, "These ought ye to have done, and not to have left the other undone." She was all for this world, and therefore she had failed in her influence over her eldest son. Lucy was but a child compared to what her age had been at her own marriage. For years she had managed for her widowed father, and at his death, when she had reached her thirty-third year, she became the wife of Edward Wilton. The poverty in which she had lived at home on the sixty pounds a year which was his stipend as a curate, made her tremble at the loss of even a penny. Poverty she dreaded beyond all other of earth's trials; and by her firm exertions in her husband's house, she kept off its terrible consequences.

As Lucy and her husband walked home in the evening, she told him the advice his mother had given her. "Poor old soul!" said he, "she goes too far in these matters. I believe she'd live upon bread-and-water for a week, rather than go on credit."

"Well, Charley, isn't that right?" asked Lucy. "I've heard Patty say the same thing; and she'd do it, too."

"No doubt she would; but it's all nonsense, my dear Lucy. If there was no credit to be had in the world, business would soon be at an end, I can tell you."

"Well," replied Lucy, "you know better than I do. A man must know better than a woman; and I dare say it is different in London."

Charles did not reply, and the matter dropped.

The week slipped by, with its pleasant hours, and the end was approaching.

One evening, while they were at tea, Charles asked, "Well, Lucy, are you tired of sight-seeing?"

"Oh, no, no; what is there to see now? Oh, I shall never be tired!"

Instead of answering her question, he said, "Lucy, you once made me promise to give you lessons in dancing after we were married; are you ready to begin?"

"Oh, yes, to-morrow, if you like. You know you said I should soon be able to help you in teaching your pupils; but—" and she hesitated, "I'm afraid it would interfere with my business as a dressmaker. I could get so much at that, especially in London. I was only to-day thinking of asking you when I might begin."

"Never, Lucy, never; no wife of mine shall ever be a dressmaker."

His stern tone startled Lucy; but seeing him smile at her look of dismay, she said, "I suppose, then, it is not so genteel to make dresses as to teach dancing?"

"No, certainly not, Lucy."

"Well, she said, laughing, "I can't see much difference. I shall have to use my feet instead of my hands, that's all."

"You little goose," was the reply, "you know nothing about it ; but we won't talk of your working at all now ; I hope to be able to keep my wife without that. The truth is, I wish you to learn to dance because we are invited to a ball next week, and I should be ashamed of my Lucy if she could not equal other ladies who will be there."

"A ball ! oh, Charles !" and her face flushed with delight, and then a cloud passed over it ; "but, Charles, I'm afraid I must not go. Patty says only wicked people go to balls."

Charles laughed heartily at this speech, and when after a long discussion, or at least conversation, for he had it all his own way, on the subject of worldly—or, as Charles called them, "innocent"—amusements, he proposed taking her that very evening to the theatre, she had not moral courage to refuse. But in the midst of all that dazzled and amazed her, there was a something in the men and women on the stage, and among the audience, from which she shrank—a want of refinement and delicacy in word and action which had a repelling influence on the mind of the simple and innocent country girl. It was the same at the ball to which she accompanied her husband the following week. Charles Wilton's pupils had not been among the higher class, and this ball was given by a wealthy tradesman residing in the neighbourhood of Holborn. But Lucy, after one or two visits to the theatre and another ball, soon overcame all her scruples, and entered heart and soul into the amusements and pleasures to which her husband introduced

her. The very strictness in which she had lived at Cowslip Farm made the re-action greater. After a few weeks, Charles Wilton succeeded in finding a house near Bloomsbury Square; two hundred pounds of Lucy's money furnished it respectably, and another hundred enabled them to commence housekeeping with ready money. Lucy had very quickly acquired all her husband could teach her of his art and excelled in it, not even the drudgery of teaching could make her less enthusiastic. In six months the young people had a large number of private pupils, as well as a class at home, with every prospect of a good income; the young people may be considered, therefore, to have begun life under the most prosperous circumstances. But, oh! how much was wanting! Open and honourable principle on the part of Charles, and a knowledge of housekeeping and a careful expenditure on Lucy's. These were worldly deficiencies; but if we supply their places with pride, self-confidence, certainty of success, and, above all, a forgetfulness of God and a total absence of religious duties, what could be expected in the end but ruin, both temporal and eternal?





## CHAPTER XI.



YEAR passed, in which everything appeared *couleur de rose*. Lucy was a fine lady now, dressing well, keeping two servants, and joining her husband and his friends in every scene of gaiety and amusement. Both the young people were diligent in business, but they lived only for the present; there was no thought for the future either here or hereafter. Truly theirs was a butterfly existence.

The human frame, however, is in itself a standing proof of the "law of nature" which, as the Apostle asserts, "was a law to the heathen who knew not God." Pleasure, dissipation, vice, bring their own punishment in weakened powers or impaired health. Lucy's constitution, never strong, began to fail under the united effects of daily teaching, late hours, and a constant round of pleasure and excitement. Michaelmas arrived. The second anniversary of Lucy's wedding was approaching; she looked pale and fagged, and her husband began to fear she would break down during the next quarter before Christ-

mas, which is always the best and busiest with professors of dancing. A week still remained before the pupils would assemble and the classes commence. "Lucy," he said, "would you like to go to Lynnford for a week and see your sister?"

"Oh, yes, above all things!" and her blue eyes brightened, and her cheeks glowed. "Oh, Charles! Patty will be sure to receive us now we are getting on and so prosperous, don't you think so?"

"She has never written, Lucy."

"No, I know that; but when I see her I think it will be different." And so with renewed hope in this prospect Lucy prepared for the journey. They reached Lynnford about five o'clock on Saturday evening. Lucy rested herself carefully, and went to bed early; she had determined to see her sister the next day, and she was much fatigued with her journey. They stopped at the "Red Lion," the best inn in Lynnford; but for the first evening kept themselves from being seen by any in the town, and to the waiters and maids at the inn they were quite strangers. Lucy rose early on the Sunday morning, and wrote a long, earnest letter to her sister. Charles at least called it early, for she was writing at nine o'clock; but he did not make his appearance for some time, and it was past ten when they sat down to breakfast.

While they sat at breakfast Lucy said, "I am going to chapel this morning, Charles; Patty is almost sure to be there. She cannot refuse to speak to me when she sees me; if she should, I have written her a letter, and I shall send it up to the Farm during

church-time. I do not think, however, that she is likely to be away from chapel, and you'll go with me, Charles, dear, won't you ?”

He first replied by whistling, and then said, “ Well, Lucy, this is a rather strong move of yours : we haven't been to church a dozen times since we were married, and now you want us all at once to turn Methodists.”

“ Oh ! hush, Charles !” said Lucy ; and a twinge of conscience made her shudder as she felt how true was the accusation.

Here, in the well-known town, old recollections came strong upon her, and she sighed deeply as she said, “ Patty must never know that, Charles ; but I have told her in the letter how well off we are, and living like gentlefolks, and that you are a good and loving husband to me, and that she need not have been so afraid on my account.”

Lucy looked at her watch as she spoke. She did not, therefore, notice her husband's silence after such a wife-like speech, nor see the vacant look in his eyes as if thoughts in the far-off future were troubling him. He was roused by Lucy's hasty words, “ Dear me, it is half-past ten ; I must go and get ready. You will go, Charles ?” she added, imploringly.

“ Well, yes, if you wish it so very much, I'll go.”

A few minutes before the service began, the worshippers in the little Wesleyan chapel were attracted by the appearance of a strange lady and gentleman, attired in the most fashionable manner. They were shown into a pew not far from the seat of John Dale

and his wife, whose presence was quickly discovered by Lucy. When the congregation stood up, Lucy could see the profile of the dear old face, and tears blinded her eyes as she continued to look earnestly at it. Presently Patty turned, and caught sight of the stranger. Startled, but not sure, she looked again, and recognised in the fashionable-looking woman of the world her once quiet, gentle sister Lucy.

At first she flushed, but as the flush faded away, she averted her face; and not another look could Lucy obtain, though she watched earnestly for it.

The service continued. Patty struggled with her feelings till they became insupportable. She could not remain to meet those two as they left the chapel. Smart as she was, Patty knew the manners and dress of a real lady too well, and the exaggerated style of her over-dressed sister removed her farther than ever in appearance from the ladies of Denham Court. Her feelings were torn with mingled anger, pity, and disgust.

All this interfered with her present religious duties. At last she whispered to her husband, "John, don't move, I am going home. Lucy and her husband are here. I will *not* meet them."

She then quietly rose, and walked out of the chapel.

Nothing but her husband's firm hold kept Lucy from following her. He had a horror of a scene, and whispered, "There is nothing the matter; see, Mr. Dale has not moved."

No, indeed, he had not. Patty's whispered infor-

mation had sent his eyes wandering round the chapel, till at length they rested on the strangers. He could understand Patty's conduct then,—even he could hardly sit out the sermon. When he reached the door of the chapel, there were Lucy and her husband waiting for him.

The honest farmer, although for a moment awestruck at the gorgeous array of his wife's sister, could not resist her loving, earnest words, and her husband's hearty recognition. They walked away to the farm together, thereby proclaiming to the townspeople whom they met that the grandly-dressed lady was the dancing-master's wife, once Lucy West.

During their progress Lucy earnestly repeated to John what she had already told Patty in the letter, of their success, their splendid house, their servants, and the society in which they mixed. John had never seen London, and therefore imagined these descriptions of greatness and grandeur must be true. Now and then a doubt entered his mind as Lucy appealed to her husband in confirmation of what she said, for his answers to her frequent questions, "Don't we, Charles?" "Is it not, Charley?" wanted the heartiness of conviction, as if he knew of something unexplained.

In the meantime Patty had reached home, and found Lucy's letter. During her walk, notwithstanding her first impulse to avoid meeting her sister, her heart yearned towards her. But after reading her letter—so worldly, and self-confident in spirit, so full of pride and vanity, and claiming to be received

because she had proved herself right in her choice—Patty's heart closed against her.

"No," she said to herself, "she shall not come here; this is not a place for fine ladies with grand houses and fashionable manners. She has chosen her path, let her keep it; she does not want me."

And so she sat and hardened her heart, till she heard footsteps and voices approaching. John entered alone. Before he could speak, she exclaimed, "They shall not come here, John; I will not see her. Let her go elsewhere with her pride and her finery."

"But, Patty," said her husband, with rather more displeasure than he ever showed to her, "Patty, she is your sister; she looks pale and tired with the walk. I must ask them to come in and rest a bit."

"Do as you please," she said, passionately; and starting up as she spoke, she rushed across the kitchen to the staircase, and was gone.

John heard the bolt drawn in the bedroom door as he passed through the porch to invite Lucy and her husband into the kitchen where she had spent so many happy days. She was very pale, but became, if possible, paler, on seeing that the room was empty, and her sister absent.

"Where is Patty?" she asked.

"Up-stairs," replied John.

"In her bedroom? let me go to her," and she started forward.

"No, don't go, Lucy, don't go; Patty will not see you. She went up and locked herself in when she heard you coming."

Lucy stood for a moment looking stunned, then exclaimed suddenly, "Come, Charles, let us go ; I shall not stay where I'm not welcome. Patty will be sorry for this some day."

But Charles Wilton did not deal in heroics ; he had been asked to take a glass of John's home-brewed ale, and he had no intention to forego this refreshing draught because his wife and her sister were unfriendly. Lucy sat and waited for him with flushed cheeks and a resigned look of wife-like obedience.

And when at length Charles rose to go, he shook hands with the good-natured farmer, saying, "Good-bye, Mr. Dale ; thank you for trying to induce your wife to be friends with Lucy, but I see it is useless. Well, it doesn't matter ; Lucy wants no help now from Mrs. Dale, and I hope if she should require it at any time she will never condescend to ask for it."

"I should think not," said Lucy, indignantly. "Good-bye, John," she added, seeing the look of regret and distress on his round, good-tempered face ; "good-bye, I'm sorry I came ; it has brought up the old grievance, and annoyed you."

"Well, never mind, Lucy, it can't be helped. Good-bye, God bless and take care of you," he added reverently, and they were gone.

Patty from her window unseen watched Lucy, as leaning on her husband's arm, she slowly crossed the rustic bridge,—saw her, as they passed through the gate, turn her flushed face and tearful eyes to have one more look at the old Farm, now so glorious in 'umn beauty—and yet there was no relenting in her

heart. She took upon herself to judge and avenge her sister's conduct, forgetting Him who has said, "Vengeance is mine, I will recompense, saith the Lord."

The evil effects of Patty's conduct upon her sister's mind may be seen by the remarks she made to her husband as they walked back to the inn.

"Charles, if people who profess to be so very religious can be so unforgiving, I don't think there can be much reality in religion."

"Of course not, my dear Lucy; at least, not in that sort of religion: you may depend there's nothing in it but delusion or hypocrisy. Why, you are every bit as good a wife as your sister, with all her strictness and fanaticism."

"Well, but Charles, Patty is really good; I know she reads her Bible, and I'm sure she's not a hypocrite."

"Not she," laughed Charles, "she speaks her mind too plainly for that."

"Yes, indeed she does, but Patty wouldn't do a wicked thing for the world; and oh, Charles, perhaps she is right about balls and plays, and all that: you know if we are to die some day, it will be no use to talk about fine singing and concerts and balls then, and that is what Patty feels, I know."

"I daresay your sister does not do wicked things, such as stealing, and lying, and swearing," said Charles, passing by the balls and concert question. "She has had no temptations to do so all her life; she was kept from them in her youth by Lady Arabella, and now by

being shut up in her quiet farm ; but Lucy, you don't do such wicked things, either. And Lucy, I think your sister's unforgiving temper quite as wicked as anything. What is the use of her religion if it does not teach her to be forgiving ? Lucy, she is your sister, and she may fancy herself very religious, but I have no opinion of such a religion, I can tell you."

Alas ! how true it is, that the religion of Jesus Christ has no enemies so likely to injure it in the eyes of the world as some of its professed followers.

With soothing talk, and, we must own, not the most correct remarks on religious subjects, Charles succeeded in partially removing from his wife's mind the unpleasant recollection of her visit to Cowslip Farm. Their appearance in the town had been spoken of to the Spearmans, and most hearty was the welcome with which they were received by these warm-hearted Devonshire people. They spent the day with them, but to remain at Lynnford, so near to her sister, was out of the question, especially with the chance of meeting her on market day. Lucy could not do that, so Charles reckoned up his money, and found he could spare enough for a journey to Plymouth.

"Oh," said Lucy, when she heard this, "how delightful to have a look at the old places, and we can call upon Mrs. Henderson, who was so kind to me when poor Aunt died. Oh Charley, it will be so nice to show you the house where I used to live when I was a little girl ; and we must find that dear Jane Watson, who stayed with me till the funeral. And then to walk on the Hoe, and go over the Dockyard,

and hear the marine band, and you with me! Oh Charley, I'm so happy." Charles Wilton looked at the bright eyes and heightened colour of his wife with some amusement but great satisfaction. At least this would make her forget Patty's unkindness, and do her health more good than even a week at Lynnford. So next morning they started by the coach which passed through Lynnford, and reached Plymouth in the evening. Here they remained till the end of the week. Lucy found all her friends, and was welcomed by them with great pleasure. She went to the old places with her husband, hanging on his arm with no little pride. Ah, how often in after years did she look back with mingled feelings to this Devonshire trip—she felt it to be, notwithstanding its painful commencement, one of the happiest weeks she had ever spent in her life.





## CHAPTER XII.

**N**EARLY two years have passed away since Lucy and her husband visited Lynnford, and spent such a pleasant week at Plymouth. Autumn is again approaching, and they are looking forward to a great increase of pupils after the beginning of the Michaelmas quarter. On the evening we are about to describe, Lucy sat at work in the nursery; in a cradle at her feet lay a sleeping boy eighteen months old. Since the birth of her baby she had been obliged to give up some of her private pupils who lived at a distance; but they were still prosperous, and Charles attended to the class at home when Lucy was too weak, or too much engaged, to undertake it, so that their income continued good; and yet they never seemed to have money to meet their quarterly bills. When they had drawn out three hundred pounds from the bank soon after their marriage, Charles had said, "There, Lucy, we needn't fear now; we have two hundred pounds left for a rainy day."

And sometimes now, when the butcher or the baker was pressing for money, Lucy would say, "Charley, dear, I think the 'rainy day' has come : would it not be as well to draw out another £100 from the bank ?—much better than being worried so about those bills ?"

He generally replied, "All right, dear ; I'll manage it ; don't you fidget."

And so she trusted him. Patty would have told her, that, with careful management, young people beginning the world as they had done, and so quickly realising a good income, ought not to have been in debt, or even to have had credit accounts at butchers', bakers', or anywhere. But Lucy knew nothing practically of her sister's careful, saving habits, which, had she stayed a year or two at Cowslip Farm, she might have learnt to imitate. All she now remembered was that everything went on smoothly. There were no debts, no want of money, plenty to eat and drink, and good comfortable clothing. The secrets of house-keeping, the habit of keeping account of money paid, the different prices of provisions, the quantity required for a family of four grown persons and an infant, or how long that quantity ought to last,—all were as Greek to her. Even had she thought the knowledge of these things important, she had no time now to spare during the hours of duty, and every leisure moment was filled up, night after night, with what are called the pleasures of the world. No wonder she looked pale and thin, and that her naturally weak constitution should begin to fail. She is staying at home this evening, partly because the child is far from well, and partly from

feeling unequal to the effort of dressing for a concert, although some friends have promised to call for her. The baby becoming restless, Lucy laid down her work, and stooped to place him in a more easy position. As she did so, the door opened, and a servant entered.

“ Please, ma’am——”

Lucy held up her finger. “ Hush,” she said, in a whisper ; and then, beckoning her near, continued, “ If Mrs. Humphreys is come, give her my love, and tell her baby is not well, and I am too tired to go out this evening, and ask her please to excuse me.”

As the girl left the room, closing the door softly after her, a flush rose in Lucy’s face. Back upon her memory came that evening, when she had left her sister’s house with deceit in her heart. Again she sees that kind sister leaning over her infant’s cradle, and holding up her finger with a whispered “ hush,” as she has just done. Every scene of the few months which followed that fatal evening passes in review before the mind’s eye, till with a violent effort she casts them from her, and recollects only her sister’s unrelenting conduct, and the present seemingly happy position in which she is placed.

And, in a certain sense, Lucy might be called happy. Her husband kind and affectionate, their income good, and, if ignorance is bliss, she is too ignorant to see the danger of credit and debt, and has too much confidence in her husband to suspect him of deceit. Patty Dale had judged him harshly, because her judgment was founded on prejudice. To be a dancing-

master was, in her eyes, a warrant for being capable of committing every evil under the sun. Yet Charles Wilton was not all evil : weak in principle, deficient in moral courage, and, above all, totally regardless of any higher and holier motives by which to regulate his conduct, can we be surprised that in the hour of temptation he should fall ? He had taught Lucy to deceive her sister, while at the same time he concealed a secret from herself, which she had never yet discovered ; how could he now, by telling Lucy, prove John Dale and his wife right in their suspicions of his want of rectitude ? On this particular evening he was giving a lesson at a house not far from his own. He left at eight o'clock, but, instead of returning home, took a different direction, and walked with hasty steps towards the Strand. Half an hour brought him to one of those close thoroughfares lying between Fleet Street and Lincoln's Inn Fields. Passing down one of the narrow streets, he knocked at the door of a shabby-looking house, and waited with evident anxiety for admission. The door was opened after some minutes by a tall, meanly-dressed man, whose prominent nose, deep-set dark eyes, and crisp curls proclaimed him one of Abraham's scattered race.

"What do ye want ?" were the first hasty words ; and then, recognising his visitor, he added, "Oh, it's you, Mr. Wilton ; come in, I've been expecting you ;" and he shuffled in his slippered feet along the passage to a back parlour. Placing a flaring tallow candle on the table, he closed the door cautiously, and then turned and looked at Charles Wilton.

Charles seated himself, as if waiting to be questioned.

The Jew rubbed his hands one over the other, and followed the example of his visitor. "How much have ye got for me to-night?" he asked, at length, his bead-like eyes twinkling with the unholy light of Mammon-worship.

"Not any—not a farthing," was the reckless reply.

"What, nothing! not even the interest! This won't do, Mr. Wilton, you know it won't. You've been putting me off week after week with your promises and excuses, and I can't stand it any longer. It's more than four years ago since you borrowed that one hundred and fifty pounds of me, and I want it back. I told you when I renewed the bill that it should be for the last time."

"And how much interest have I paid for it in the four years?" said Charles Wilton, with a shudder; "more than the original amount borrowed, I'm quite sure."

"Of course, of course; my money is my business. You told me you were going to marry a rich wife when you borrowed the money; and then, after you've married her, you come to me, and ask me to renew the bill on your own security, instead of paying me as you promised. Don't you think I must be paid for that?"

"Oh, well, yes, I suppose so. And now, what are you going to do? I can't settle this bill, and I want you to divide it. I shall be able to pay you half at Christmas, that I know; and the remainder in twelve

months from this date. Will you do this? If not, you must do your worst, and take the consequences."

"And what may the consequences be?" asked the Jew, satirically.

"The Insolvent Court, and you will lose all," was the reply, in a gay, careless tone. Who would have guessed at the sinking of the heart concealed by that indifferent speech? But he knew the money-lender well. Had he allowed the real terror he felt at the prospect of a refusal to show itself, that refusal would most certainly have been repeated.

Now the man hesitated, as if considering what was the best sort of bargain he could make with the silly victim so completely in his power. At last he said, "If I renew these bills in the way you wish, what will you pay for the accommodation?"

"Oh, name your own terms," said Charles; "I wouldn't offer you five per cent, if I could help it."

"Five per cent!" almost shrieked the Jew; "five per cent! Well, get it for that, if you can; get it, and pay me."

"Man, you know I cannot," was the reply, "or I shouldn't come to you, that's certain. Now, then, where's the old bill? I have the blanks in my pocket. Tell me what the two amounts are to be. It's getting late, and I want to be off."

The Jew took out his bill-book from a desk on the table, and said, "Well, let me see, this is for one hundred and seventy-five pounds. Make the bills one hundred pounds each, and pay me ten pounds down, and I will do it for you, both at three

months ; one you will meet, you say, at Christmas. Very well. I promise to renew the other when it comes due."

"What !" exclaimed Charles, starting up, "thirty-five pounds for three months' interest ! No, never ; I will go to prison first," and he put on his hat.

"Stay, stay, my friend, don't be so hasty ; here, tell me, can you pay me anything in cash ?"

"No," said Charles, "not a penny." He had twenty-five pounds in his pocket, but this he knew was wanted at home for household bills ; no, he must keep that.

After some further demur, the Jew at length consented to give up his demand for ten pounds in cash, and the bills were drawn and accepted for one hundred pounds each. The old bill was given up to him with the remark, "Well, now, I haven't charged you so very much, after all ; and you know the affair will be quite off your mind for three months at least, and if you pay me one of the bills, I will renew the other for any time you like."

"Very true," said Charles to himself, after having wished the old usurer good-night ; "very true, I will put it away from my mind now, at all events. What a relief to know I have that dreadful piece of paper safe in my pocket !" He walked with a light, rapid step, and on reaching the Strand, paused at one or two shops with the intention of choosing some little delicacy for his wife's supper, which he knew would tempt her weak appetite. He was about to enter a fish-monger's in whose shop were exhibited some very fine

lobsters, when a hand was placed on his shoulder, and a voice exclaimed,

"Wilton! is it really you? where have you been hiding yourself?"

He turned at the words, and flushed with surprise, and, to do him justice, vexation. Two of his gay companions stood before him—two of those in whose society the debt had been incurred which had driven him to Lyons, the Jew, for a loan to enable him to pay a falsely-called "debt of honour."

"Are you going home?" they asked.

"Yes," was the reply.

"Oh, then, we are all going the same way;" and linking their arms in his, they led him on through the Strand into Long Acre before he had time to reflect on what they were about to do.

"How is it we have not met all this time, and why have you been hiding yourself?" asked one.

"I have been much engaged, and I certainly have not been hiding myself," was the reply.

"Not hiding, eh? Well, at all events, it was downright shabby after winning all that money from us months ago, to keep away like this, and not give us an opportunity of getting any back."

"Upon my word it has not been intentional," he replied; "my wife is very delicate, I do not like to leave her too often in the evening."

"Oh, we know what a good, amiable fellow you are," was the flattering reply; "but it is not late now; why not come in for an hour and just look on, even if you don't play; Mrs. Wilton cannot object to spare

you for once, I'm sure ; and we've a new man now, such a player ! he sends the balls just where he pleases, I can tell you, and no mistake."

"I don't think he plays better than Wilton," said the other.

"Neither do I," replied the first speaker, well aware how the flattery would take ; "and here we are at the very place," he added, as the three stopped before a brilliantly-lighted doorway, on the lamp of which appeared the word "Billiards."

Half willingly, half forced by those on each side of him, Charles Wilton entered the house in which, more than four years previously, he had lost one hundred and twenty-five pounds, and borrowed the fatal one hundred and fifty pounds to pay it. Fatal indeed, as the sequel will show. Poor Lucy, she had no tempting supper that night. Two hours after entering the gambling-house Charles Wilton left it, muttering to himself, "Oh, what a fool I am ; there goes the last of poor Lucy's five hundred pounds !" Charles Wilton unthinkingly endorsed the Bible doctrine, "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool."

And who were these tempters who, after losing sight of Charles Wilton for so long, had now met him with such ruinous results. Let us go back six years, to the time when Charles, having reached the mature age of one-and-twenty, determined to give up school-keeping and become a teacher of dancing. Amongst Mr. Wilton's earliest pupils at Pentonville were two boys, both older than Charles, whose names were Elliot and Parkèr, and whose parents lived in the

neighbourhood. Elliot's father had been successful in business, and retired a few years before his son came of age. This retiring from business was customary in those days, but it seldom suited the active habits of a man who had all his life been in the earnest pursuit of pounds, shillings, and pence. Many who thus retired gradually sunk and died before they had enjoyed their self-imposed rest for any number of years; so it was with Elliot's father; he died, and left his son a good income, and to his wife the care of this son as well as an excellent maintenance for herself. Parker was a musician of great talent, able to earn large sums by these talents, but equally able to spend them when earned, so that he was always poor. Knowing his popularity the tradesmen gave him unlimited credit, and when driven for payment he had a friend in Lyons the Jew, who for a consideration was always ready to advance the sums he required, provided he gave him another good name as security. One evening, not long before Charles Wilton's visit to Lynnford, he had been to a concert with his two friends, as he called them. Charles had just taken a large amount in payment from the Principal of a ladies' school at which he taught, and his companions knew it. On the way home from the concert they passed this same house, with the same illuminated lamp, and the word "Billiards."

"Come, Wilton," said Parker, "we haven't had a game for an age, let's have a trial to-night; it's not late—just for an hour—we can do a great deal in an hour."

Charles hesitated; he was not remarkably fond of

billiards, although he played well and liked the excitement, but he hesitated to say "No." He was fond of the society of these young men ; he did not wish to offend them : and least of all could he endure their banter. They knew the power of that weapon with Charles Wilton, and they wielded it accordingly most unmercifully. They used it now with such success that he went in with them, and was very soon deeply absorbed in the game. At first, to his surprise, he won largely ; he more than trebled the amount he had staked, which was all he had in his pocket. His excitement increased ; he scarcely knew how it happened ; but when they left the place he found himself without a penny ; and heard to his dismay, that he had lost one hundred pounds to one of the players, whom Elliot said was *his* friend. Amid all his faults Wilton had never been fond of drinking, therefore on this night the small quantity of wine he took seemed to have bewildered him. He had taken the first step in entering the billiard-room, —all that followed was down-hill and easy.

"You must pay it somehow," said Elliot, as they went away arm-in-arm, and alone, for Parker had left them. "It's a debt of honour, you know."

"But," said Charles, piteously, "it's impossible. Oh ! where's Parker—oh ! won't he help me, do you think ?"

"Not he ; he's hard up himself. But won't your father do anything for you ?"

"My father !" said Charles ; "oh, he would not if he could ; besides I dare not ask him."

"Well," said Elliot, "there's only one way. I must take you to my friend; he'll lend it to you, I dare say, with my name."

"Oh, my dear fellow, can you help me in this way? I shall be grateful for life."

"Well, then, come along; but you'll have to sign a bill, and pay lots of interest and all that; and you know if I put my name to it, you must let me have some of the cash, I suppose."

"But how can I?" said Charles. "The Captain will want the whole one hundred pounds."

"Oh, it's all easy enough. Draw it for one hundred and fifty pounds, and that will include interest and something for me into the bargain."

"But however am I to pay one hundred and fifty pounds by-and-by," said Charles, "if I can't pay one hundred pounds now?"

"Nonsense, man. When the bill is due old Lyons will renew it for a trifle; and, besides, such a good-looking fellow as you might get a rich wife any day, and then it's easily paid."

And so Charles was persuaded. They went to the Jew and got all they wanted. And Charles Wilton, although he did not get the rich wife, obtained one with money enough to pay off this dreadful debt. Had he had the firmness of principle to do so, and the candour to tell Lucy all, how much of sorrow would have been spared to her in the future. He had hesitated at first to take the money from the bank for that purpose, yet he drew it out little by little, unknown to Lucy, for other uses, and to pay

the interest. Elliot had contrived to withdraw his name from the transaction, by paying that portion of the one hundred and fifty pounds which had been given to him ; so that for the present bill Charles was alone responsible. The young men had seen less of him since his marriage. He was not idle in his profession, and for very shame he could not see his wife so diligent with her pupils and not imitate her example. Two or three times the tempters had met him and enticed him into the dangerous room ; he had lost and won as usual, and had more than once been driven to Lyons to save his credit and his *honour*. Alas ! it should be called *dishonour*, this reckless staking and losing sums of money which might save many families from starvation and misery, and which is often wanted by the dissipated players themselves to pay their just debts. On the last occasion, as one of his tempters said, he had left the billiard-table a winner ; the sum was trifling in comparison with what may be won or lost at these ruinous games of chance, but he was firm in his resolve not to play any more that evening, and left with a hasty excuse that he had an important engagement. He had then made a resolve never to enter the place again ; but when, on the evening we have described, they overtook him in the Strand, a strong temptation arose in his mind to try his luck once more, and, if possible, win enough to pay off Lyons the Jew. The fatal results we have seen.

Christmas arrived in due time, and Charles Wilton, with no little delight, was able to meet the bill for one hundred pounds, as he had promised the Jew.

He had returned home that evening, after so weakly giving way to temptation, completely conscience-stricken and rather alarmed at the recollection that no money now remained at the bank to help in future need. For three months he worked hard and steadily, avoided places of amusement in which he might be likely to meet his old tempters, and spent his leisure evenings with Lucy to her great delight. Her health and spirits rendered her unfit to enjoy the gaieties and pleasures which had still attractions to her, but when her husband volunteered to remain at home and read while she worked, the disappointment ceased to be felt. How often in the future did Lucy recall those happy evenings.

But yielding to the pressure of circumstances is no proof of principle. Charles, after paying the one hundred pound bill, felt so light-hearted at the thought of having paid off thus much of the original debt as to forget that the balance, another hundred pounds, with interest, still remained unpaid. After such a strong restraint upon himself for three months, a re-action took place, and the succeeding summer found him and Lucy gaily as ever entering on the same round of expensive amusements without a thought for the future.

We will now look back a few years, and see what changes have taken place at Cowslip Farm. After Lucy's visit to Lynnford, Patty for some months seemed determined to harden her heart against her sister. She would angrily tell her husband to hold his tongue, if he ventured to speak of her or her husband, till at last all memory of her seemed lost. The baby,

who had been named after her aunt, had also the name of Ann ; and as she grew older, and a younger child took the name of "baby," Patty would not allow her to be called "Lucy." Perhaps nothing could have happened to annoy John more than this, and he ventured to remonstrate with her. "No," she said, "I could not bear to hear the name: I must have nothing to remind me of my lost sister." But the little Nanny, whose second name was Ann, after her father's sister, grew so like her Aunt Lucy, that no one needed the name to be reminded of her. She was a sweet, gentle, engaging child, and sometimes Patty's heart would throb with agitation as she saw in her child the dear little sister who had so vexed and annoyed her by her conduct sometimes. The little one would climb on her knees, and look in her face with an expression so like her aunt's, that Patty would push her away almost angrily, and then catching the child in her arms, burst into tears and weep over her in agony. There was a struggle going on in the heart of Patty ; conscience would whisper, "You are not acting kindly or as a Christian to your sister," and then pride would rear its haughty head and argue "that she had never written since her last visit," and even when pride would be conquered, religious zeal, self-confidence, or bigotry, call it what you will, would talk of the separation from those who belonged to the world, and falsely quote the words of Scripture—"Come out from among them, and be ye separate."

About the time that Charles Wilton, shocked and ashamed of his conduct in having lost the twenty-

five pounds at billiards, was delighting Lucy's heart by his steady industry and kind attention, Patty's little Nanny was taken ill. Frantically she sent for the doctor, and he pronounced the disease to be scarlet fever. The child was nearly five years old, and her sweet gentle ways had made her the darling and the pet of the whole house. She was the only girl in a family of five: no wonder therefore that Patty trembled as she watched by her sick bed, and saw the flushed cheek and heard the choking breath which a sore throat causes in this painful disease. Day and night for a week she watched in agonising suspense, and then in the gentlest manner the doctor told her there was no longer any hope. Her little darling lay pale and motionless on the pillow when her mother turned to the bed after hearing the fatal decree. Patty did not shed a tear; she was stunned with the blow. Little Nanny had never been strong, but this was so completely unexpected. Johnny and Frank had fought through the disease at about the same age with scarcely a day in bed. She now stood looking at the child with hard dry eyes, unable to believe she was going to lose her. John, who had met the doctor, walked into the room: his sun-burnt healthy face looked pale and softened with grief, and the tears stood in his eyes.

"Mother," said the little one, looking at her, "Where's Aunt Lucy? I dreamt about her." Patty could not speak.

"Who told you about Aunt Lucy?" asked her father.

"Johnny told me. I shall see Aunt Lucy soon, shan't I?" The child closed her eyes; she never spoke again, and during that night Patty stood by the death bed of her child, with the words ringing in her ears—"Mother, where's Aunt Lucy?" For days Patty rebelled against the Father's hand which had taken away her child, and then by the coffin of that little one tears came for the first time. All at once there rushed upon her memory her words to Charles Wilton, "I would rather see my sister in her coffin than the wife of a dancing-master!" Bitter were the tears that now flowed unrestrained; but by-and-by they became softened, and Patty left the grave of her child almost determined to become reconciled to her sister; but when the grief and sorrow for her loss began to subside, Patty would reason with herself, that while she might wish to receive and forgive her, there appeared no opening for such a result. Lucy never wrote. Sometimes a visitor from Lynnford to London would return and describe what he had heard or seen of the gay grand doings of the young people in a manner that closed Patty's heart against them. And yet her conscience condemned her, especially when John would venture to hint that had she been less stern to her sister, this marriage, which seemed so to have led her astray, might have been prevented.

Patty never now replied to her husband when he spoke on the subject, and she would silence her conscience when alone by arguing that if Lucy wished to be friends, it was her place as the youngest and the

offender to write first, forgetting how her last overtures of this kind had been received. She would say to herself, "I do not believe Lucy cares to be friends with me now, she is so taken up with her finery and her gay doings that she has no time to think or care about her plain homely sister." And so the years passed by, every one seeming to make the breach between the orphan sisters wider than ever; but working its way in the hearts of both was an influence stronger than either of them guessed. Added to this, Providence, who ordereth that "all things shall work together for good to them who love God," was about to lead them to Himself by a way that they knew not.





### CHAPTER XIII.

**I**T is again evening, and we find Lucy sitting alone in the nursery, with a baby of twelve months old on her lap. The nurse has just taken the eldest boy to bed. She is much changed. Nearly six years have elapsed since she left her sister's home a bride. Her husband had said to her in the morning,—

“Lucy, dear, Hutchins is going to drive to Croydon to-day in his gig; he has offered to give me a lift; it will be a good opportunity for me to call on Miss Holland and the other schools to ascertain what number of pupils I am likely to have next quarter. A good blow of fresh air in the country will brighten me up a bit;—yes, and it would do you good, too,” he added, noticing her pale face. “I declare I feel half inclined to hire a four-wheeled chaise, and drive you and the children down, instead of going with Hutchins.”

“No, dearest, no,” replied Lucy, “it would cost too much, we cannot afford it; besides, I scarcely feel fit

for such a journey. You go with Hutchins, it will do you good, and cost nothing ; but don't let him stop and drink on the road, as he often does ; you know what a splendid spirited horse he drives."

"All right, darling, don't you be nervous about me ; Hutchins is a capital whip, I can trust him. Good-by." And so he went.

Lucy might well shrink from incurring further expense now. Notwithstanding their continued success, in spite of her determination to give lessons even when she required absolute rest, the debts seemed to increase, and a want of ready money was a continued annoyance. The summer months are the long vacation to teachers of dancing, so that while the household expenses continue the same the income is less. Lately she had been mortified by messages from the butcher and baker, refusing to supply more goods until some portion of their accounts had been paid. She had certainly been fortunate in obtaining good servants, especially the one who now acted as nurse. Her close attention to teaching, and, until lately, her frequent absence from home in scenes of pleasure and amusement, placed in their power the whole domestic arrangements. With all honest intentions, they knew nothing of economy ; and, not seeing it practised in the parlour, were not likely to consider it necessary in the kitchen. The first to take alarm was Mary the nurse. She heard and received constant messages from the tradespeople about their bills ; and while she still shrunk from troubling her mistress, she tried to introduce economy in the expen-

diture as far as her limited power would go. Mary had read her Bible ; she knew the command, " not to be eye-servants only ;" and with praiseworthy earnestness she tried to prevent waste in the kitchen or unnecessary luxuries up-stairs. At last she had ventured to speak candidly to her mistress, and Lucy, bewildered and alarmed, made a determination to effect some change,—to look into the matter, and to ask her husband to draw out of the bank enough money to set them even with the world, so that they might start afresh. She also determined to ask some of her friends, whose income she knew to be less than their own, how they managed ; she would neglect these domestic affairs no longer. These were the thoughts which now occupied her mind, as she sat rocking herself backwards and forwards with the infant on her lap. She meant to have spoken to Charles that very day ; as he was out, however, she would do it to-morrow. The chimes of an old church clock close by rung out three-quarters past six : she expected Charles home by eight. The door opened, and Mary entered the room.

" If you please, ma'am, there's a young man in the parlour wishes to speak to you. He asked for master first, and when I said he was out he asked for you. He says it's something very important."

Placing the infant in the cradle, Lucy descended the stairs and entered the room. A young man advanced, and offered her a roughly folded and rather dirty-looking note. It was directed to her husband, but not sealed. She took it with hesitation.

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"Mr. Wilton is not at home," she said, still holding the letter unopened; "I will give it to him directly he comes in."

"It will be just the same if you read it, ma'am. Master said I was to be sure and get an answer from either you or Mr. Wilton."

"Be seated," she said, advancing to the window and opening the note.

The young man obeyed, and watched her countenance as she stood in the fading twilight reading. At first a deep flush arose, and then faded to such a deathly paleness that he started up, thinking she was going to faint. But she merely turned to look for a chair, which he hastily placed for her. She then sat down, and again read the letter through. It ran thus:—

"August 30th, 18—.

"Sir,—Unless the bill for £175, which came due on the 13th of August, and was dishonoured, is paid by to-morrow twelve o'clock, the law shall take its course; I will not be trifled with any longer.

"Yours, &c.,

"R. LYONS."

"What does it mean?" she gasped out. "I do not understand. Do you know the contents of this letter?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"And does my husband owe your master £175?"

"Yes, ma'am, besides law expenses."

"But what is it for? where is the account?"

"It is borrowed money," he replied.

"Borrowed money!" She was going to add, "impossible!" when a recollection of her husband's restless anxiety for days past—the consciousness that difficulties about money had been gathering round them for months—silenced her. She stood looking like one stunned. Presently there flashed across her mind a recollection of the £200 left in the bank. "How foolish of Charles," she said mentally; "he has borrowed this large sum rather than take out that money." Oh, it was all right now; she would tell him directly he came home, and then to-morrow it could be drawn out and the money paid. In this confidence she spoke.

"Please to tell your master he need not be at all anxious about this money. Mr. Wilton will go to the bank early to-morrow morning and draw out the sum you require, and if you are here by twelve o'clock I will pay you myself."

"Oh, very well, ma'am," said the young man, "if that is done it will be all right. I will be here to-morrow."

He took up his hat, and wished her good evening; but as he passed out at the door, and walked with quick steps back to the Jew to deliver his message, he could not help thinking it rather strange that a man with money in the bank should allow a bill to be dishonoured, and submit to be served with a writ and the consequent law expenses. "I suppose I shall have to go to-morrow," he said to himself; "but it's my belief that poor pale lady knows nothing about it."

After he had left Lucy seated herself in the lonely parlour, and again and again turned over in her mind the various circumstances connected with this terrible disclosure. Quarter after quarter chimed from the neighbouring church tower, till at length it struck nine. At this moment Mary the nurse entered the room.

"Oh dear me, ma'am, are you sitting here in the dark?"

Lucy closed her eyes for a moment against the bright light of two candles which Mary carried on a tray containing supper; and then, as she placed it on the table, exclaimed,—

"I cannot eat any supper, nurse."

"Oh yes, I'm sure you can, ma'am; look here; now do try," and she uncovered a dish containing some little delicacy which she had cooked for her mistress, and then observing her paleness, she poured out a glass of wine, and persuaded her to drink it. The wine refreshed her, and after a while she was able to take a small portion of the supper so kindly prepared for her. Having so far succeeded the young woman left the room, perceiving that her mistress wished to be alone. The time passed on, and as the musical chimes rung out three quarters past nine, Lucy's anxiety at her husband's continued absence became so great that she rose to ring the bell, intending to send round to Mrs. Hutchins and inquire if Mr. Hutchins had returned. At the same moment the sound of a carriage stopping at the house caused her to pause. The bell was hastily rung, and as the

door opened Lucy heard strange voices, then the shuffling of feet on the pavement and along the passage, as if something heavy were being carried in. She stood as if turned to stone. As the feet paused outside the parlour door, the nurse's voice aroused her, exclaiming, "Oh no, no, not there—my mistress !" She started forwards and opened it, exclaiming, "Yes, yes, in here !" She seemed instinctively to know what sight awaited her, and she stood on one side with unnatural calmness as three or four men entered, and carried what appeared to be the lifeless form of her husband across the room, and laid it on the sofa. A gentleman followed, who looked at her with pitying eyes. She saw he was a doctor.

"Is he dead ?" she asked, in smothered tones.

"No, my dear lady, no; he will revive presently and recognise you, I have no doubt; he was sensible before we left my house, and wished to be brought home."

They approached the sofa. Lucy stood looking at the ghastly face, the pallid lips, the dark-matted locks over which blood-stained bandages were bound, in speechless terror. Presently the eyelids quivered, and were feebly raised for a moment, but long enough to recognise the sad face looking down upon them, for the pale lips parted with a smile. The doctor turned quickly.

"Where is my man ?" he whispered.

"Can I do anything, sir ?" asked Mary, following him to the parlour door.

"Yes, fetch a tea-spoon and a wine-glass."

She hastened to obey, while he went to his carriage and brought in a phial containing a stimulant. Mary met him at the door, and asked, in a hurried, sorrowful whisper,—

“How did it happen, sir?”

Lucy’s sense of hearing, rendered acute by the tension of the nerves, could distinguish in the hasty reply,—

“Thrown out—spirited horse—drunken driver.”

She understood it all then. The doctor approached with a tea-spoon. Lucy, as if in a dream, passed her arm gently under her husband’s head and raised it, while he drank eagerly the reviving cordial. After a few moments he said in faint tones,—

“I must speak, doctor.”

“Very well, gently then, don’t excite yourself.”

He looked at his wife. “Lucy darling.” She stooped to listen. “The bank—that money.”

“I know all about it,” she said, interrupting him, and thinking he referred to the debt of which she had read this evening; “don’t be uneasy, I can arrange all that.”

He closed his eyes as if relieved by her words. The mental powers were scarcely clear enough to reason on the why or how Lucy knew all about it. He rested on the assurance, little dreaming what pain a few more words of his might have caused her. All at once, like the last bright flickering of the taper, he seemed to recover strength and power.

“Raise me a little,” he said. And with the

doctor's help Lucy placed another sofa pillow under him.

"Doctor, is there any hope for me?"

"We will use the means," was the reply, "but I fear——"

"Say no more, that will do—poor Lucy!" and the eyes closed again.

After a few minutes he said, "Read to me, Lucy—the Bible."

The Bible! Where should she find one? When and where had she last seen that book of books? With a bewildered look she turned to a side-table, lifted one book after another, but it was not there. A closed book-case stood in the room. In it she remembered was Lady Arabella's present, carefully preserved but seldom read, but where were the keys? In vain she searched her pocket, and gave an agonized glance round for the key-basket. She was about to rush from the room, when Mary entered, and placed a Bible in her hand. She came back to the sofa, and, seating herself, opened the book, and turned over the leaves nervously. What should she read?—where find words suited to her dying husband?

"Read the twenty-third Psalm, ma'am," whispered the nurse; and then seeing poor Lucy's evident inability to find it, she gently took the book from her, and opening at the place, laid it on her lap. Lucy, with a faltering voice, began to read. "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters."

Charles opened his eyes and listened until she came to the 4th verse: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me."

"Stop, Lucy, that is the Christian's hope, not mine."

Lucy stopped, appalled. What could she say to him? Clearly on her memory came back Christian's progress from the wicket-gate to the dark river. Her husband had reached the dark river, but he had no roll of comfort in his bosom to carry him over in peace—no shining ones to receive him on the other side. His voice again roused her,—

"Lucy, read to me about the thief on the cross; and is there not a chapter about the eleventh hour? I read it when I was a child at my grandmother's knee."

"Where is it, nurse? find it for me." And Lucy gave the Bible to her servant with shame and confusion of face.

"Shall I fetch a clergyman?" asked the doctor, who stood watching the changing hues on the face of the dying man, as the sands in life's hour-glass were rapidly sinking.

"Yes, oh yes," was the reply.

Close to the church, whose musical chimes had so often marked the waning hours to poor Lucy, lived one of the curates—one who, in those days of cold indifference to religion, feared not, in the very face of opposition, and under the titles of Methodist, fanatic, or enthusiast, to preach the Gospel in purity and truth.

This hour was sure to find him at home, and therefore, hastily seizing his hat, he followed the doctor at once to the dying couch of poor Lucy's husband. As they entered the room, her soft, quivering voice was heard uttering the prayer of the dying thief, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." The young clergyman advanced, and took up the subject.

"My friend, can you take the Saviour's loving words to yourself in answer to that prayer?"

"May I do so?" said the dying man faintly. "My grandmother taught me to read that story, and one about the eleventh hour, but I have scarcely opened my Bible since. Can there be hope for me?"

"Do you rest your hope on that Saviour alone?"

"Yes, oh yes: can I be forgiven?"

"My friend, it is the Saviour's glory to forgive. He says, 'Whosoever cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.'"

"Is it too late?" was the despairing cry.

"No, only believe."

"Pray for me," he said.

The clergyman knelt. In such an hour prayer was the Christian's only hope; and while he prayed the lips of the dying man whispered, "Lord, forgive, Lord, remember me;" and with these words on his tongue he passed away from the earth.

Lucy, too, had knelt, and with tearless eyes buried her face in her hands. She felt herself lifted by the nurse.

"No, no, nurse, I cannot go yet; I cannot leave him."

"My dear lady," said the doctor, "you can do your husband no good now."

She cast a look of terror towards the sofa as he spoke, and then allowed herself to be led from the room, still rigid and tearless. The doctor followed.

"Get her to bed, nurse, as soon as you can; I will send you a draught for her; but if she wishes to see her husband by-and-by, let her do so; excite her to tears, if possible."

Lucy ascended the stairs mechanically, entered the nursery, and threw herself on the chair in which she had sat nursing her baby only a few hours before. He was still in his cradle, and the noise of her entrance woke him. Nurse lifted him in her arms, and placed him in his mother's lap. Roused thus suddenly from his sleep, and finding himself not noticed by her, he put up his lip in that way so touching in an infant and burst into a piteous cry, that went at once to the mother's heart. She snatched him to her bosom, the tears gushed forth, accompanied by hysterical sobs, which alarmed the child and made him scream with terror. Nurse took him from her, and attempted to soothe him, but she allowed the mother to weep on as if her heart would break. At last she said,—

"Dear mistress, do try to compose yourself, for baby's sake; he won't be pacified now until you take him."

Struggling to regain composure, Lucy dried her eyes, and held out her arms for her child.

"Poor fatherless babe!" she exclaimed as she took it, "your mother must nerve herself now for your sake and your brother's."





## CHAPTER XIV.

“**T**ROUBLES,” it is said, “never come alone!” and when Lucy awoke the next morning, after a heavy sleep, caused partly by exhaustion and partly by the draught, she knew not what additional sorrow awaited her. Her promise to the young clerk she had entirely forgotten ; and when he arrived, at twelve o’clock, the servants sent him away in awe-stricken anxiety, telling him their master was dead, and their mistress could not be seen. The nurse had been enjoined most earnestly to keep her mistress upstairs until after the jury had visited the house to view the body of her husband, previously to the inquest, which was to take place that afternoon. The mournful visit had been paid, and followed a few hours afterwards by the undertakers, who placed the remains of the once gay and handsome Charles Wilton in their narrow resting-place. The house during the evening had an unusually quiet air, after the excitement of the previous twenty-four hours. Lucy sat alone in the nursery. She had not yet fully realised her sad

position. Sudden grief has the effect of producing a benumbed state of the feelings, which might pass for indifference. She was, as it were, stunned. Presently she became conscious of some unusual noise in the hall,—the voices of strange men and the angry tones of the servants distinct in eager discussion. She rose and opened the door, that she might learn the cause of all this disturbance.

“It’s wicked and cruel of you to come now,” were the first words that met her ear, “with poor master dead in the house, and poor missus so ill.”

“We can’t help it, cook ; we’re very sorry,” was the reply, in a man’s rough voice.

“And do you mean to say you’re going to stop here till you get your money?”

“Them’s our orders, cook ; and more than that, if it’s not paid pretty quickly we shall have to take all the furniture instead ; how’s our master to be paid else ?”

At this moment Lucy, pale as death, appeared on the stairs. The speaker advanced when he saw her. He was a large, rough man, but refined and humane-looking when compared with his comrade, who stood behind him at a little distance.

“We are very sorry, ma’am,” said the foremost, who seemed to know to whom he was speaking ; “we are very sorry, but we must do our duty ;” and he took off his hat as he spoke.

“And what is your duty ?” she asked, with trembling lips.

“Why, ma’am, we have got a judge’s order, at the

suit of Mr. Reuben Lyons, for one hundred and seventy-five pounds, to take the goods and furniture for payment. It's what's called a execution ; but perhaps you can pay us, as you told the young man yesterday you would have the money ready for him ; if so, it's all right."

"Oh," said Lucy, passing her hand over her forehead, "I recollect now ; but I could not go to the bank to-day. You know what has happened, I suppose?" she added nervously.

"Yes, ma'am," he replied, and a tone of pity mingled with the words ; "but if so be as you can get the money at the bank, it will be all right."

"I cannot go till to-morrow," she said.

"No, ma'am, oh no ; but we needn't do nothing till then but take the inventory. I'm sure I shall be very glad not to have to take anything, and so will my mate there, I know," and he pointed over his shoulder with his thumb at the man behind him, who grumbled assent.

Lucy stood expecting them to leave. Seeing this, the first speaker advanced towards the kitchen stairs, saying, "We needn't keep you, ma'am ; we'll just go down-stairs, and perhaps cook 'll give us a bit of supper."

"What do you mean?" she asked.

"Why, ma'am, I suppose as you know we've got to stay here till the money's paid."

"Stay here ! sleep here to-night?" she asked.

"Yes, ma'am, certainly ; it's all right, ain't it, cook?"

At this moment Mary the nurse, who had been putting the little boy to bed, made her appearance in haste.

"There, go down-stairs at once," she said, guessing in a moment what it all meant by the man's last words. "Cook, give them what they want. Oh, dear mistress," she added, turning to Lucy, "come up-stairs, I'll explain it all to you. Oh, I wish I had been here, you shouldn't have been annoyed like this."

Poor Lucy followed her in utter bewilderment. Truly the storm had burst, and she had to bear it alone. A worse trial awaited her. As soon after ten o'clock as possible the next morning Lucy sent for a coach, and taking the nurse and baby with her, desired to be driven to Lombard Street. She fortunately remembered the bank in which her money had been placed, yet she felt rather bewildered on entering at the business-like aspect of the place, and the number of persons waiting. At length, seeing one of the clerks apparently disengaged, she addressed him timidly,—

"Can I draw out two hundred pounds from the bank in my husband's name?"

"Have you a cheque or an order from him?" was the reply.

"Is that necessary?" she asked, in a faltering voice: "will not my signature do?"

"Without your husband's? no, certainly not." And the young man looked at her suspiciously. Then he asked, "What is your husband's name?"

"Wilton," she replied.

"Wilton—Wilton," he repeated, then turned away, and spoke in a low voice to another clerk, who stood at a desk. The latter came forward.

"We have no account in that name, ma'am."

"No account!" she repeated. "Yet I think it was here I came with my husband to draw out three hundred pounds."

"Possibly : how long since?"

"Five years ago," she replied.

"Oh, then the balance has been drawn out by Mr. Wilton himself. Is he aware of your application?"

"He is dead," she replied, with white lips.

"Oh, then I shall be quite ready to ——"

His words were unheeded. The crushing sense of all that hung over her—the recollection of her husband's half-uttered words about the bank—her helpless widowhood—her fatherless children—overpowered her exhausted frame ; a faintness seized her, and but for the bystanders she would have fallen. The sudden noise and commotion brought the clerks to the counter, on the alert in case this should be a scene got up to cover a robbery. The door of the manager's room was hastily opened, and Lucy, now perfectly insensible, carried in and laid on a sofa.

"Is this lady alone?" asked the manager, a grey-headed, fatherly-looking gentleman, who seemed to lose sight of his important position in pitying compassion.

"There is a coach at the door with a woman and child in it," said one.

"Call her in," was the reply.

One of the clerks hastened to obey. At the same moment another, politely thanking the strangers for their assistance to the lady, and hinting that their presence was no longer required in a place so sacred to gold as a manager's room in a bank, held the door open for them to leave. They hastily retreated, and almost at the same moment Mary appeared, in terrified anxiety. The news of her mistress having fainted had very quickly reached her. A few words from her explained everything. A little water, and the sound of Mary's voice, after a while aroused poor Lucy from her faintness. She made an effort to sit up, and at the same moment a clerk entered with an account of the money for which poor Lucy had applied.

"I am better now, sir," she said, "and able to listen, if you will kindly explain to me about the money."

The clerk advanced with a written statement. She took it, but did not attempt to read.

"Only tell me," she said, "is there any money belonging to my husband, Mr. Charles Wilton, in your bank? I do not understand business; if you will merely tell me this, I want nothing more."

"I am sorry to say, ma'am," said the clerk, "there is no balance in our hands; the last cheque for twenty-five pounds was drawn and received by Mr. Wilton himself nearly twelve months ago, and we have had no account with him since."

"I thank you," she said, in a tone of despair; adding, as she turned to leave, "I am very sorry to

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have caused such a disturbance, but the shock was too much for me."

"Don't mention it, madam," said the manager, in a tone of compassion, as he held the door open for her to pass out, leaning on the arm of her nurse.

In a few minutes they were on their way home. Home! how the thought of it filled her soul with anguish. The men there, expecting their money; the funeral and its expenses; her fatherless children; her weak health! And to whom could she turn for help? Her husband's father had been dead some time, his brother and two sisters were scattered about the country in situations, the former as tutor, one of the latter as private governess, and the other as teacher in a school. She did not know the address of any member of her husband's family, excepting his mother. And then, as her real position made itself clear to her mind, she felt how much now depended on herself—for her children's sake she must not give way. And during that ride home in the lumbering hackney coach from Lombard Street to Bloomsbury Square, a new life seemed to spring up within her—a proud determination to work for herself and her children without asking help of any one. Yes, she would show them what she could do. One thought of her sister forced itself on her mind, to be dismissed with angry pride. What! ask Patty for help! No, never! And so, still strong in self-confidence, still forgetting to seek help from "One that is mighty," she prepared herself for a struggle with the world, quite unconscious of her own utter weakness. Her first act on arriving at home was to

send for the man to whom she had spoken on the previous evening, and candidly tell him the truth.

"I was afear'd of it, mum," he replied ; "Mr. Wilton would never have let things go so far if he'd a had money at the bank ; don't you believe it, mum."

"Well, and what will you do now ?" she asked.

"Well, mum, we must do our duty. The furniture by right belongs to my master, and the law must take its course."

"Do you mean to say you will sell it all directly ? Oh, is your employer so cruel as that ? Do you think if I went to him it would do any good ?"

"Why, mum, I'm afear'd not ; them money-lenders ain't got much feeling. Howsomever, we needn't touch anything till arter the funeral, I think ; so don't you bother yourself any more."

This last reference was too much for poor Lucy ; she burst into tears, and sobbed as if her heart would break.

"There, go into the kitchen, that's a good man," said the nurse, taking her mistress by the hand to lead her up-stairs.

"Yes, I'll go," replied the rough servant of the law ; "I'll go. Surely one needs to be hard-hearted to go through all this here. Poor soul, what would she do if she knew we could detain her husband's dead body for the debt if so be there ain't enough to pay !"

But poor Lucy was spared this terrible trial. Several friends of the pupils came forward to settle their quarterly accounts. The kind young curate

visited the hard money-lender, and prevailed upon him to stay proceedings till after the funeral, and, under the sad circumstances of his poor victim's death, he could scarcely dare to refuse.

During the week that passed before the funeral, Lucy wrote to her husband's mother an agonized letter relating the circumstances. Her own trouble and sorrow had so stunned her, that she had almost forgotten her husband's relations ; but Mary had seen an account of the inquest in a daily paper, and she came to her mistress, and said, "Don't you think, ma'am, you could write to Mrs. Wilton—poor master's mother ? It would do you good to tell her all about your sorrow ; and, poor thing, if she should see it first in the papers, it will kill her."

"I know I ought to write to them all," she said, "but I don't know where the rest live, and I can't look over poor Charles's desk yet ; but I'll write to his mother, Mary—yes, to-day I'll write."

Mrs. Wilton had returned to her native village in Cheshire, with a small annuity raised by the insurance on her husband's life, and was residing with two maiden sisters. Lucy wrote to her just such a letter as an agonized, loving wife would write to her husband's mother. It reached her only just in time to prevent the painful news from being read by her first in a public newspaper, for at that period London papers were not seen in the country until many days after publication. Lucy received a reply, full of heart-broken sympathy such as only a mother could write ; but she mourned over the fact that she had neither

money to spare, nor the health to endure a journey to London.

The week passed away ; and at its close the body of Charles Wilton was carried to its final resting-place. Not till then did Lucy quite realize her lonely position. The circumstances of her husband's death were the subject of public comment, an account of the inquest having appeared in the papers. Well for her that this happened ; it raised up friends for her, who, pitying her sorrow, took the management of her affairs ; and, therefore, after the sale of the furniture had satisfied Lyons the Jew, the quarterly receipts from her pupils enabled her friends to settle a few pressing demands, and leave in her hands a small sum of money, with which she proposed to establish herself as a dress-maker.

Lucy had stated frankly her wish to follow the business to which she had been trained in youth. Her delicate health and depressed spirits made dancing and its gaieties distasteful to her. Besides, the friends who so kindly volunteered to help and advise her were not the gay dissipated companions of her prosperity, whose pride might have been shocked at the idea of dressmaking. No, these friends were only too glad to find her able and willing so to exert herself, and they encouraged the determination by every means in their power. Among other acts of kindness, they purchased at the sale sufficient to furnish two rooms, and other little articles which the nurse pointed out as valuable to her mistress from old associations. All this unobtrusive

kindness seemed at first entirely lost, for the great sorrow had stunned her. It was necessary, however, for her to leave by quarter-day, as the landlord had let the house, and this at length seemed to rouse her.

"Come with me, nurse," she said ; "I must choose lodgings a long way from here. I wish to go where no one can find me."

"What, not even those kind friends who have done so much to help you, ma'am?" said nurse.

"No, I mean to work for my children without help. I shall take very cheap apartments, and hide myself from the world."

Far away from the scenes of her gaiety and pride, Lucy found a home in the house of a respectable woman, who readily agreed to the terms she offered ; and Mary at once set herself to work to remove the furniture that had been so kindly saved, and with the greatest earnestness arranged the two rooms so that they should look home-like and comfortable ; and it was decided that Lucy should leave the house in which she had passed so many hours of mingled happiness and pleasure, and anxiety and sorrow, the following day. But before she left, her husband's brother paid her a visit.

Edward Wilton, far away in a school in the north of England, heard nothing of the sad occurrence till gently told of it by his Principal, who had seen the name in the paper when reading the account of the inquest. The week's vacation at Michaelmas was approaching, and Edward, who felt anxious about the gentle sister who had won all their hearts, asked and

obtained permission to leave a few days earlier. He met her with a heart overflowing with sorrow: he listened to her tale of woe with interest and pity. But even his sympathy and sorrow for his brother did not seem to soften her heart. There was a proud, rebellious feeling at work in Lucy's mind against the stern decree that had so tried her; she could not yet trace a Father's chastening hand in the stroke. And so, without a relative in the world whom she would permit to guide her, and setting her face against all other help or advice, Lucy set forth on her perilous struggle with life, literally alone.

The last to leave her was Mary, the nurse. As she stood looking round the little parlour, which her own hands had arranged till it looked bright and home-like in the early autumnal evening, she said, "I'm so sorry to leave you, ma'am; but if I stay I shall be only a burden to you, although I would not ask for wages."

"Oh, nurse, don't, pray, don't talk of it; I must do without a servant now. Besides, I am in your debt already for the quarter's wages. Why did you not mention it before every one else was paid?"

"No, ma'am, no; I would not. I do not want it. I've saved a little, and the character you gave me has got me an excellent place. And you'll let me come and see you sometimes," she added, changing the subject suddenly. "I promise you no one shall get out of me where you are living, if you don't wish it. But, dear lady, you're not strong; pray do not keep yourself away from all your friends till it is too late."

"Never fear, nurse, I shall do very well; and if I die, so much the better; who is there to care for me now?"

"But the dear children, ma'am, oh, think of them!"

"I have, nurse. I will tell you now. There is a letter in my desk, to be opened after my death. I have written what I wish done about my children."

"I'm glad, indeed, to hear that, ma'am; and I'll wish you good-bye in comfort now. But, dear mistress, if you would only look up, and trust in God to help you, I should feel more happy about you, I should indeed."

Lucy shook hands with the faithful creature who had thus timidly ventured to direct her thoughts upwards; but there was no response, and so the mistress and servant parted to meet no more on earth.





## CHAPTER XV.

**T**HREE months passed away. Christmas, with its joyful hours and holy memories, had been welcomed, and was gone. During these three months, Lucy, with earnest energy and untiring industry, succeeded in obtaining employment as a dress-maker. Indifferent to fatigue, to cold, or privations, she rose early and sat up late to finish the work entrusted to her. The landlady, a kind, motherly woman, would sometimes remark, "It's surprising to me what that poor young thing gets through—she looks so weak and delicate; and yet she must have the strength of a lion to work as she does." Alas! it was an unnatural strength—the strength of energy, will, excitement, and pride—which kept her up for a time. The blow came at last. She caught cold one evening after walking home from the house of one of her customers in the pouring rain; and although she struggled against the painful symptoms that followed, they overcame her at last, and in one week she was lying on a sick-bed, completely prostrated.

"Ah, I thought it would come to this," said the kind landlady, as she stood looking at the helpless form, the flushed cheek, the bright anxious eyes, telling of the consuming fever within. "I shall send for my doctor."

"Oh no, no ! I have nothing to live for now ! Let me die in peace."

"Die ! Nonsense !" was the reply. And the landlady hastily left the room to fulfil her determination.

The doctor soon made his appearance. A glance told him the whole tale. He had heard some little about this lodger from the landlady, Mrs. Gibbs ; of her trials, her losses, her anxiety to keep her children without help from others ; and here was the result of over-work and over-excitement.

"Mrs. Wilton is not going to die yet, is she, sir ?" said the landlady, in a cheerful tone, as they stood by the bedside.

"Well, no, I hope not. What would become of that blue-eyed boy, with his bright curly locks, if he were to lose his mother ?"

Nothing hitherto had roused her. Now, as the doctor spoke, she opened her eyes, and looked at the boy as he stood staring in wonder at the doctor ; but she only sighed, and closed her eyes again in utter weakness.

"Do you think she is dying, sir ?" asked Mrs. Gibbs, as she accompanied the doctor to the door.

"Well, no ; it is not quite come to that yet. She is suffering from the reaction of over-excitement ; unless these feverish symptoms increase, I have no doubt

a few days' rest will restore her. You must get her nourishing things, and a bottle of good port wine——" And there he hesitated. Yes, these were the needful things for his poor weak patient ! Could she obtain them ?

Perhaps the position of a kind-hearted, compassionate doctor of limited means is even more painful than that of a poor clergyman from whom so much is expected in his parochial visits. The latter meets with a case of poverty and sickness which he scarcely knows how to relieve from his own resources, or even from funds raised by subscription. But the former, by his surgical knowledge, knows it to be a case of life and death, in which wine and other delicacies are of more importance to the patient than any drug he can possibly prescribe ; and yet to assist in every case they meet with of this description would require the doctor and the clergyman to be men of large independent means. How completely facts are opposed to this theory, is too well known to need comment.

Some such thoughts may have passed through the doctor's mind as he paused in his remarks to Mrs. Gibbs. She seemed to guess them, for she said, hastily,—

" I will get all she wants, sir. I'm sure she has money to pay for it, and she ought to have nourishing things to do her good if only for the sake of her children. She's seen better days, sir, I know ; and she's dreadfully afraid of spending her money. She pays me my rent the very day it's due ; and I've known her go without a meal rather than spend more than

the money she allows to last her a week ; so, sir, I'm sure she'd starve rather than get into debt."

"Well, Mrs. Gibbs, you mustn't let her starve now. Keep her very quiet ; don't allow the children to disturb her ; and give her wine and nourishing things."

"Yes, sir, I'll attend to her, you may depend. She's got money, I know ; and if she hadn't, poor soul, I'd get what she wants myself, that I would."

"I believe you, Mrs. Gibbs ; and you would never be a loser by doing so. I'll send her a draught by-and-by, and look in early to-morrow, and see how she is going on. Good morning."

And so he left, satisfied that the good, kind landlady would keep her promise respecting his patient.

But poor Lucy was not to be so easily restored to health and life. All she had gone through, both mentally and physically, for years, united to overcome her now ; and on the doctor's visit the next morning, he found her in a state of feverish exhaustion, which in the course of a few days brought her to the brink of the grave. For weeks her life seemed to hang on a thread ; and when at length the crisis had passed, it was with difficulty that her youthful constitution rallied from the shock. Slowly and gradually, however, health returned, and with it a consciousness of her position. She had looked death in the face really now. In proud defiance she had taxed her bodily strength, as if its power was at her own command. She had refused to accept assistance from earthly friends, and had closed her heart against Him who has said, "Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver th-

and thou shalt glorify me." And how could she have stood in His presence? But even though she had forgotten and rebelled against Him, the Father's hand was stretched out still. While she lay there on that bed of weakness, all the events of her past life rose before her, and the evening readings at the Farm came back to her mind with a new meaning; and from the very gates of death she was restored not only to life on earth, but to the new and hidden life of the soul. There was joy in the very weakness which obliged her to lie in quiet repose, and live over again the evenings at the Farm; to follow Christian from the Wicket-gate to the Celestial City; to trace in her own career the battles in the town of Mansoul; mentally to read over again the beautiful parables of our Lord, and then to say, with the Prodigal, "I will arise, and go to my Father." How pride was replaced by deep abasement! How humbly now she thought of her own conduct, and how differently she judged her sister! Yes, she would hope to see her once more, and claim her forgiveness; and, as she thought of this, how earnestly she prayed that, if it were God's will, this happiness might be permitted. The very wish seemed to give her new life. There was now something to live for; and then she talked to her kind landlady about it, and earnestly inquired of the doctor if he thought she might travel so far as Devonshire, and when.

By this time March was approaching; and the doctor, although pleased at the prospect of such a change for her, forbad all thoughts of the journey until

April or May, but gave her every encouragement to hope that with care her strength would then be quite equal to it. She seemed to recover rapidly with this prospect in view. She could thank kind Mrs. Gibbs for her attentive nursing, which the doctor told her had so much helped her recovery. While too ill to notice her boys, how that good friend had tended them, and brought them now, looking well and strong, to their mother's bedside ! Well for her that the Providence of God had raised up such friends, for Mrs. Gibbs knew of no one to whom to write. Lucy had so carefully concealed her address, that none came to see her. Mary had written twice, but these letters were locked in her desk. Once she had managed to say, when expecting death, "Mrs. Gibbs, when I die, open my desk ; my boys——" here she had paused through faintness, but these few words would have been quite enough for Mrs. Gibbs. In that desk was a letter to her sister, committing her boys to her care. Now she longed to see that sister herself ; yet she still would not write to her. A letter might be mistaken ; and she knew Patty's character too well to suppose that she would refuse her love to her widowed sister and that sister's fatherless children when she saw her pale, ill, and in poverty.

April arrived at last. Lucy had opened her little store, to pay the doctor and her landlady. The former hesitated at first to take any payment, but she looked so pained that he gave way. With Mrs. Gibbs she was equally firm. She made arrangements to leave her furniture with her until she could write from Devonshire.

If, after all, Patty would not receive her ! The thought was agony : still she would prepare for it. These payments left her with only a few pounds for travelling expenses. "So much the better," she thought ; "I shall go to my sister in real poverty." It was a lesson in humility from which she did not shrink.

At length the happy moment came, when, on a bright spring morning in May, seated on the outside of the Exeter coach, she started from the White Horse Cellar, Piccadilly, with the kind wishes and farewells of good Mrs. Gibbs, who had accompanied her to the coach-office.

For the first fifty miles, Lucy and the children enjoyed the journey ; the sweet fresh air, the hedges covered with May blossoms, the glorious chestnut-trees, with their pyramids of flowers, the elegant laburnums, the sweet-scented lilac, and, above all, the yellow primroses and cowslips, reminded Lucy of Cowslip Farm, even to pain. And yet it seemed to give her new life, and her heart beat with excitement as they rapidly passed mile after mile of the journey. The children were full of eager delight with the coach ride, the green fields, the cows, the sheep, the little lambs frisking in the meadows, and, not least, with the prancing horses that at every ten or eleven miles were led from the stables to take the places of the willing animals who had drawn them along so swiftly and readily for their share of the distance. Then they made friends with the guard, who felt interested in the pale, delicate-looking widow, and did all he could to make her comfortable. Little Charlie's bright intelligent face and

blue eyes attracted his attention. The boy was enthusiastic at the sound of the horn, and could scarcely believe his eyes when the guard placed it in his hand, and told him to blow. But the permission was of very little use; Charlie, with all his efforts, could only produce a puffing sound that made even his mother smile, and little Frankie laugh with delight.

"Why can't I blow it like you do, sir?" asked Charlie.

"Because you have not breath enough, my boy," said the guard. "You're but a weak little chap, I think."

"He is not very strong," said Lucy.

"And you are not strong yourself, ma'am, I'm thinking," he remarked.

"No," she replied, "I have just recovered from an illness, and I'm going into Devonshire for change of air."

"Just the place for it, ma'am. That air will do you good, if anything will."

"Yes, I believe so," said Lucy; "and it is my native air too."

"Oh, then, there's no doubt of it." And so the good-natured guard kept up a little conversation with Lucy and the boys till night approached.

By this time, however, Lucy's strength began to give way. At first, excitement, hope, pleasure in the thought of where she was going, seemed to make her quite strong; but it was a fictitious strength, and now it failed entirely. Before they stopped at Andover for supper, Lucy became very faint, and nearly fell off the coach. Two passengers outside had for some miles kindly taken care of the children, who were

sleepy ; but now the guard could stand it no longer. "There's no passengers inside," he said ; "we shall change horses presently, and I'll put 'em inside : we shan't have no insiders till the morning." One of the passengers changed places, to sit on the other side of poor Lucy while the guard blew his horn as they approached Andover. Here he assisted her down, although she assured him she could not eat any supper ; but she managed to go in with the children, and allowed herself to be persuaded to drink a small quantity of brandy-and-water, which, however, she would not touch till she had paid for it. She gave the children some bread-and-butter from her basket, and a little milk which they provided for her at the inn. After a while she felt better ; the change from the coach had done her good.

The twenty minutes allowed for the passengers to eat their supper passed very quickly, and the horn blew the signal for them all to take their places. The guard had been mistaken about inside passengers : one was waiting at the inn to go on to Exeter. "All the better," he said to himself ; "the poor soul will have a woman with her, and that's a comfort anyhow. She looks good-natured—I'll try her," he said.

"There's a lady and two children a-coming inside, mum. The children is as good as gold, but the poor lady's very delicate. She won't be any trouble to you, mum, I hope?"

"Oh dear, no," said the lady. "I suppose she is an outside passenger?"

"Yes, mum ; and I'm really afraid for her to sit

there all night. And the children, too ; she isn't fit to take care of herself, let alone them."

The kind guard presently returned with Lucy, whom he assisted into the coach, and then lifted in the two children, who seemed delighted with the change and warmth, and nestled up on the seat. "There now, you're all right," he said ; "and the little ones will soon be asleep."

Lucy looked timidly at her fellow-passenger while the light from the inn shone into the carriage, and meeting a kind smile of sympathy, she also settled herself comfortably and began to feel as if she could sleep. About daybreak the coach stopped to change horses at a town about ten miles from Exeter.

"Guard," said the lady passenger, who had got in at Andover.

He approached the window of the coach, she put her head out and whispered,—

"This poor thing must not go on any farther ; she has been ill the whole night, and just now I thought she was dying. Here, let me out, I'll help her ; perhaps if she stays here a few hours she may be better, and able to go on by the next coach."

"Wait one moment, ma'am, I'll speak to the landlady."

"Missus," said the guard, as he entered the inn, "there's a poor young widow in the coach with two children, and I'm afraid she's dying. She's an outside passenger, but I was obliged to put her inside when night came on ; I was afraid she'd fall off."

As he spoke, a lady appeared leading the traveller,

whose pale face and feeble steps quite justified the guard's opinion. Notwithstanding a doubt as to whether she would be paid, the womanly instincts of the landlady were aroused at the sight. She called hastily for a chamber-maid, and with her assistance poor Lucy was carried up-stairs and laid upon a bed. After a few minutes she revived, and drank eagerly the port wine brought to her by the landlady.

"I will stay here," she said. "Please keep my boxes; they are directed 'L. W., passenger, Lynnford.'"

The guard had already removed them from the coach; and so poor Lucy and her children were still detained at a distance of more than fifty miles from Cowslip Farm. She had overtaxed her strength. The journey outside the coach had proved too much; and it was with a kind of despairing feeling that she allowed herself to be undressed and placed in a bed from which she believed she should rise no more. The landlady, very much alarmed at the death-like paleness that spread over her face, sent for a doctor from the village. He came in haste, and after hearing from the landlady the account given her by the guard of the coach, he understood the matter at once.

"She is suffering from exhaustion," he said; "give her port wine and nourishing things. She had better stay here a few days,—she is not fit to travel yet."

"Do you think I shall be able to continue my journey, doctor," she asked, with an effort, "if I have a little rest?"

"Oh yes," he replied, "I have no doubt of it: Have you much farther to go?"

"About fifty miles," she replied.

"Oh, then, I can promise you that safely: but you must rest and take wine and nourishment. The journey has knocked you up after your illness."

She seemed now quite satisfied, and the doctor took his leave, saying, "I will call in again to-morrow, and see how you are going on."

"She does not want medicine, poor thing," he said to the landlady as she accompanied him down-stairs; "but there is not much life in her; I expect she is going home to die."

"Those are her two children, sir," said the landlady, as the boys came out of the parlour, looking frightened at the strange place, and asked for "mamma." "She's a widow, sir."

The doctor patted Charlie's head. "Take care of the boys," he added; "fatherless now, and motherless perhaps, too, soon."

"May they go to her?"

"Oh yes; better allow her to see them; it will do her good."

The landlady returned to the room leading the children.

"Charlie, be a good boy," said his mother, faintly, "and Frankie, too; do what that lady tells you, till mmama gets well."

"Yes, mamma," said the little boy, while the younger looked at her with wistful eyes.

"They must come and have some breakfast now;

that's the first thing, isn't it, ma'am? and you must have something also," continued the motherly woman:

"Perhaps, presently," said Lucy, adding, suddenly and eagerly, "I can pay for all I have, ma'am."

"Now don't you go talking about paying," was the reply; although perhaps it was a satisfaction to know that her lodger was not actually destitute. "But come along, my little dears, and we'll have a nice breakfast." The children, nothing loth, followed the landlady; and Lucy, being left alone, fell into a refreshing sleep.

The change of air, the rest and quiet in the country inn, did her good, and after a few days she found herself able to get up. Yet no one would allow her to continue the journey until a week had passed; and then, after paying the bill, she found to her consternation that her purse contained only enough to defray her journey to Eastonleigh, a town ten miles from Lynnford, and about four from Cowslip Farm by fields and a cross road, which she well remembered.

"I can walk those four miles," she reasoned to herself; "or I may meet some conveyance. I must risk it. I cannot stay here."

She said nothing of her intention to the landlady, but next morning took her place as outside passenger to Eastonleigh, with two shillings only remaining in her purse after paying her fare. The guard remembered her, and good-naturedly placed her inside, saying,—  
"All right, missus; if any inside passengers come, why, you must get out again, that's all."

And so, with a pleasant farewell to the kind land-

lady, she started once more on her interrupted journey. On reaching the inn at Eastonleigh, she asked the guard to leave her boxes there to be sent for, and, giving him one of her two remaining shillings, commenced her walk of four miles to Cowslip Farm. But even the first mile tried her strength too much. She had forgotten the great weight of her youngest boy, who, although a good walker for his age, required often to be carried. At a short distance beyond the second mile-stone they reached a few cottages, at one of which Lucy asked to be allowed to rest. The young mistress of the cottage welcomed her with true Devonshire hospitality, gave the children some milk, and nursed the little one, while Lucy rested and ate a sandwich and drank a glass of wine, which the landlady had placed in her small basket, with some bread-and-butter for the little ones. Lucy offered her last shilling to the young woman, but not a penny would she take ; and she looked after the pale young widow with pitying eyes, as, refreshed, but still feeble, she renewed her journey. The afternoon was beginning to wane as they reached the third mile-stone. Lucy could almost see the trees of Cowslip Farm, when she felt a sensation of faintness stealing over her. The youngest boy slept in her arms a dead weight, and the eldest, seeing her stop, said,—

“O mamma, do sit down a little while ; I am so tired ; I can’t walk any more.”

Yielding to her own feelings and the poor child’s request, she sat down by the road side, and leant her back against the sloping green bank behind her.

The boy seated himself near her, laid his head on her knees by his little brother, and was soon fast asleep. Hitherto Lucy had had faith to believe that her prayer to be permitted to see her sister once more would be answered ; now she gave up in despair. She could not from experience say,—

“ His love in time past forbids me to think  
He'll leave me at last in trouble to sink.”

True, such love had been around her always, but she was young in the way, and knew it not.

While she thus sat, a dreaminess, not of sleep, came over her. How long she remained in this state she could never tell. She was aroused at last by the tinkling of bells, and the sound of approaching wheels, which suddenly stopped, and the driver advanced towards them with a feeling of dismay, for Lucy's face wore the hue of death. But she opened her eyes at hearing his footsteps, and said earnestly,—

“ Oh, pray help me.”

“ What be I to do for 'ee ?” he asked, in the old familiar dialect that went to her heart.

“ Do you go near Cowslip Farm ?” she asked.

“ What, Farmer Dale's ? ees, sure ; leastways I pass the end of the lane. Will that do for 'ee ?”

“ Oh, yes. Then will you take us there ?”

“ To be sure I will,” he exclaimed ; and lifting the eldest boy, who awoke at the sound of voices, he carried him to the waggon, and carefully placed him in the straw. He then came back for the little one, who clung at first to his mother, but his fear was

appeased by the gentle kindness of the rough-looking countryman. Lucy had tried to rise and follow, but found herself unable to do so, until the man lifted her up, and then almost carried her to the waggon. After seeing them all snugly placed in the straw, he again started his horses and walked by their side. The rest, the consciousness that they were now fairly on their road to the Farm, and the soft sound of the tinkling bells, lulled the children again to sleep, and soothed their mother's agitation. Yet, as they neared the corner of the lane, the recollection that now she was so near her sister flushed her cheek and brightened her eye. When the waggon stopped the man came round to the back, and looked rather surprised at the change in her appearance.

"You'm looking another woman, sure enough," he said, as he lifted her and the children out. "I thought when I first saw 'ee that ye was going to die, and I have been round two or three times to have a look at 'ee. But you'm better now; you can walk this bit, can't 'ee?"

"O yes, yes," said Lucy; "thank you for your kind help; what should I have done without it?" she added, at the same time offering him her last shilling.

"Noa, noa," he exclaimed, "what be 'ee thinking of, it's cost me nothing; don't 'ee pay me now, don't 'ee."

"Well, then," she said, "have you got any children at home?"

"Ees, sure, two on 'em, just like them two of yours; that's what made me look at 'ee at first."

"Then take the shilling," she said, "and buy them something in remembrance of my little ones ; it will make me happy if you will do this."

The man took it even then reluctantly, saying,—

"Thank 'ee, missus, I'll do as you say. Good-bye ; and I'll hope ye'll get safe home."

He then stood for a moment watching her, as with feeble steps she pursued her way down the lane. Then called out again, as if to encourage her,—

"Good-bye once more, missus ; I won't forget 'ee nor the little ones, never fear."

Gradually the sound of the tinkling bells receded until it was lost in the distance, and then before the eyes of poor Lucy rose the gable front and rose-covered porch of Cowslip Farm. Lifting her little boy from the ground, whose toddling steps ill-suited her impatience, she made one more effort and hurried forward. But the haste—the crowding memories—the excitement at being so near—all overcame her : and before she could reach the gate she sunk again on the ground, just able to say, "Charlie, go in and say mamma is ill." Gradually her hold on the child in her arms relaxed, and she became quite insensible.



## CHAPTER XVI.

**N** EWS of the sad accident which deprived poor Lucy of her husband had found its way to Lynnford through the papers, and created such a painful feeling among those who had known them both, that they dreaded to mention it to Patty. John Dale, however, on hearing the news, determined to break it to her; he feared the consequence of any sudden disclosure by persons who knew nothing of the circumstances. Terrified and shocked at a death so sudden to one whom she looked upon as lost, still in Patty's heart arose the tenderest love and pity for her sister. What would become of her now? Where was she? Something must be done to find her. In her anxiety she rushed almost frantically to a friend who had a son in London, begging him to write and ask him to make every inquiry for her. He readily accepted the task, but to no avail. He could only write and say that the furniture had been sold off, the house let, and Lucy gone no one knew whither. Letters then occupied two days in travelling from

London to Devonshire. The terrible suspense of that week which elapsed between the letter and its reply was agony to Patty. And, when she knew all, what could she do? Nothing but wait God's time; and this, at first, she could not do with patience. How bitterly conscience reproached her for her stern, unforgiving spirit! How, in imagination, she pictured her dear sister in poverty and distress, perhaps dying, or, worse still, starving to death, and her children—she knew there was one at least. In vain she argued that Lucy ought to write. No; could she expect it after her last reception? Patty's constitution was stronger than her sister's; but this mental sorrow dimmed her eyes, and made her rosy cheek pale. At last it sent her to her knees; and then she prayed for pardon for the self-confidence and stern judgment which she could now see were sinful in God's sight. Praying breath was never spent in vain. Gradually in Patty's character dawned the Christian graces of humility, patience, brotherly kindness, and charity. Her husband, her children, her household, felt the change, and rejoiced at it; although John sympathized with her deeply about poor Lucy, and was pained to see how much she grieved and fretted about her. At last came a time of peace. She had prayed urgently to be allowed to see her sister once more; or, if that were not permitted, to have some means of knowing that, if she were dead, they might meet again in heaven. The months passed on without hearing a word about Lucy. Her sister at length learnt submission, learnt to say, "Thy will, not mine,

be done." Yet for ever in her heart echoed the self-reproach of Joseph's brethren, "I am verily guilty concerning my sister."

One afternoon early in May, Patty laid by her work and walked out into the farm-yard to speak to her husband, whose voice she heard in an adjoining field. She crossed the bridge, with her face turned towards the spot in which she expected to see him. The sound of little feet near her caused her to turn hastily. Close before her stood a boy about four years old, neatly dressed, whose blue eyes and long fair ringlets thrilled her with a strange sensation. He took hold of her dress, exclaiming in timid tones,—

"Please to come to mamma; she's ill out there," and he pointed to the farm-yard gate.

A few hasty steps brought Patty to the spot, followed by the child. A respectable-looking woman, in the dress of a widow, lay on the ground, with a child nearly two years old leaning over her lap, and trying to attract her attention. As Patty approached, he raised his large dark eyes, and looked at her. She lifted him from his mother, and then stooped over her with a mixture of hope and alarm. There was nothing fanciful or affected in the wife of John Dale; but she now raised her head, and shrieked out her husband's name in a tone of terror that brought him and his men with frightened faces to her assistance.

"John," she said, in a choked, unnatural voice as he approached, "lift her gently, and carry her to her own room; it is my sister Lucy."

John felt rather bewildered ; he fancied his wife had taken leave of her senses. Seeing him hesitate, she exclaimed, with some of her old vehemence,—

“Quick, John, quick, or she will die !”

Thus urged, the astonished farmer lifted the wasted form in his arms, and turned towards the house. Taking up the youngest boy, and soothing him with motherly words, she hastily followed, pausing for a moment, however, to desire one of the men to bring the eldest boy, and another to fetch the doctor from the town with all speed.

Quick and prompt in her movements, Patty on entering the house called one of the female servants, to whom she gave charge of the boys, with earnest injunctions to give them something to eat and drink ; and even then she reached the bedroom almost in time to see Lucy open her eyes as John laid her on the bed, and hear her utter the name of “Patty” in feeble tones.

“You are right, wife,” he said, as she appeared ; “she has asked for you.”

Hastily turning to the bed, Patty exclaimed, “I am here, dearest Lucy. Oh, why did you not come to me before ?”

But poor Lucy could only open her eyes, and smile in recognition of her sister's voice. And then she remained by her, and continued to moisten her pale lips with brandy-and-water, and apply other restoratives with loving tenderness, until the arrival of the doctor.

In the meantime the children had been plentifully

supplied with bread-and-milk, which had been prepared for the supper of their cousins. Great surprise was shown by these same cousins, on returning from school, to find strangers enjoying the good things prepared for themselves. A few words of explanation, and another supply of bread-and-milk, quieted the feelings of jealousy, for which, however, they were well scolded by the servant Grace. Poor little Charlie fell asleep over his supper, and was carried up-stairs and placed in the bed of one of his cousins. The youngest at first fretted for his mother; but he, after a while, gave way to the soothing influence of Grace's lullaby, as she walked with him about the kitchen, and then she tenderly undressed him, and laid him by his brother's side.

The message to the doctor, taken, as we know, by one of the farm servants, had been so strange and mysterious, that he delayed not a moment in making his way to the Farm. John met him at the gate, and in a few words explained the circumstances. He was not a stranger to the family, and remembered Lucy West. Yet, on entering the bedroom, he was not quite prepared for the deathlike hue on Lucy's face. After a brief examination, during which Patty had watched him with agonized earnestness, he motioned to her to follow him out of the room. He wanted to account for the symptoms which were so like death. Lucy may have been called alive, and that was all.

"Had she walked far?" he asked.

"I know not, doctor; you have heard how we found her."

"Yes ; your husband told me. I suspect she has not long recovered from severe illness, and if she has travelled from London, that would account in a great measure for this prostration of strength. However, give her a tea-spoonful of brandy-and-water every half-hour, and if she recovers sufficiently to take food, give her a little arrow-root ; but do not question her. I can leave her safely in your hands, Mrs. Dale, I know," he added, as he passed out through the porch. "I will be here very early in the morning. Good night."

Patty had left Grace by her sister's bedside while she spoke to the doctor. The young woman remembered Lucy, and looked with tearful eyes at the pallid, sunken face. Before returning to her sister, Patty went with her husband into the room in which the boys had been placed. Beautiful they looked, as sleeping children do—the rosy parted lips, the flushed cheeks, and calm repose. The fair face and flaxen ringlets of the elder boy reminded her not only of her own lost Lucy, but of the sister once so loved. The dark curls and long black lashes shading the cheek of the younger boy, whose eyes she had seen, proved his resemblance to his father, of whom she could now think with feelings of sorrow and compunction. As she turned from the room, tears, the first she had shed, rolled down her cheeks. Wiping them hastily, she resumed her place by her sister's bed. Lucy still lay in a kind of dreamy stupor. During the early part of the night she would rouse herself to drink the brandy-and-water, and smile in recognition of her

sister's attention ; but towards morning she seemed to fall asleep so calmly, that her sister dreaded to wake her, although a pallid hue spread over her face which looked like death. How eagerly Patty ran to meet the doctor when he arrived !

"Will she ever wake again, doctor?" she asked, as he stood looking at her, with his fingers on the pulse.

"Yes, I hope, I trust so ; it is the sleep of exhaustion ; she will probably rally after this. But, my dear Mrs. Dale, she is in God's hands. We must trust and wait. I will see her again by-and-by."

Poor Patty ! And was this to be her punishment ? Was the banished sister to return and die in her own house, and make no sign ? die without hearing one loving sentence from her, or giving and receiving forgiveness ?

Hours passed, and Lucy still slept on. Her sister never left her bedside. Towards the afternoon, however, some slight movement was perceptible. Presently, to Patty's great joy, she opened her eyes and uttered her sister's name. A few loving words passed, and then she took some nourishing food prepared for her ; so that, when the doctor arrived, he found a wonderful change for the better, and gave the delighted Patty great hopes of her ultimate recovery. But these hopes were not to be realized. Although she rallied sufficiently to be able to sit up during the day, yet there was no power of constitution to overcome the various shocks it had received. The doctor heard the account of her husband's death, her struggles, her illness, and the terrible journey, and he

ceased to wonder at the exhaustion from which he had found her suffering. After a few weeks he told Patty she must prepare for the worst. There was a gradual though certain wasting of the system, which nothing could arrest. Lucy did not require to be informed of this ; she knew it was coming on, and begged the doctor to prepare her sister. And yet, with this knowledge in their hearts, the orphan sisters enjoyed more real happiness in their intercourse with each other during the remaining hours of Lucy's life, than in any previous period of their existence. Lucy had told her sister all the events of the past five years, —all the good and all the evil in the career of their prosperity, the death-bed scene, the simple piety and truth of poor Mary ; and last, though not least, the fiery trials through which she had been led to the foot of the Cross. How truly united were the sisters now ! How humbly Patty listened and acknowledged that when she, in her proud judgment, had cast off these young people, a kind, loving Father was still watching over them, even at the eleventh hour, "mighty to save."

One lovely afternoon towards the latter end of July, about two months after her arrival at the Farm, Lucy sat at the open window of her bedroom, supported by pillows. She seemed so much better, that her sister looked at her with almost renewed hope. The balmy air of summer brought into the room the perfume of sweet flowers, and the varied sounds from the farm-yard recalled memories of the past. She looked down on the green lawn, where her eldest boy,

rosy and blooming, was enjoying a game of romps with his cousins, while the youngest, seated in a child's wicker-carriage, laughed with boisterous glee, as they in turns drew him round the gravel path, at a pace which would have terrified some children. Lucy spoke after a while, as if the scene before her had not fully realized itself to her mind's eye.

"Patty, when I am gone, will you write to poor Mary? you will find her letters with her address in my desk."

"I will, dear Lucy," was the reply, in a stifled voice.

This was the first time her sister had so plainly referred to her approaching death.

"And my kind landlady, Mrs. Gibbs, and the good doctor at Kennington. I should like them to know I did not forget them at last." After a pause she added, "And the landlady at the inn where I stopped; and if you could find that kind-hearted waggoner. Oh, dear Patty, how little I deserved that every one should be so kind to me!"

Patty, with ill-suppressed tears, promised all she wished.

When the boys went to bed, they came in as usual to say "good-night" to their mother. Silently she clasped them to her bosom. Was there a presentiment in her mind that she should meet them no more on earth? Patty's feelings were so moved by her sister's manner, that she sent Grace to bed, and remained up with her herself. At midnight the summons came. She called up her husband, and then

took her place by her dying sister, wiping the death drops from her brow.

"Read me Charlie's Psalm," she said, in a faint voice.

Patty wanted no book. She repeated the beautiful words as steadily as she could, while a calmness spread over the dying face.

She spoke again. "Patty, that beautiful hymn, 'Begone, unbelief.' Can you repeat it?"

Again Patty's faltering voice sounded in the stillness of the dying chamber. Lucy closed her eyes, and listened until her sister finished the fourth verse,—

"Determined to save, he watched o'er my path,  
When, Satan's blind slave, I sported with death ;  
And can he have taught me to trust in his name,  
And thus far have brought me, to put me to shame?"

"Stay, Patty. Ah, dear sister, that's my verse. Repeat it again."

Patty complied, and then finished the hymn,—

"Though painful at present, 'twill cease before long,  
And then, oh ! how pleasant the conqueror's song !"

"'The conqueror's song !' Yes," she murmured ; "Victory ! victory !" and then a slight convulsion seized her. It gradually subsided, and she looked at Patty with a smile of recognition. "Lift me up, dear." Patty raised the drooping head, and rested it on her bosom. The glorious summer sun threw his first morning rays into the room as the erring yet pardoned spirit of Lucy passed away from earth.

Yet even on that day of sorrow Patty could not feel so sad as when her sister left her to seek for happiness in the follies and pleasures of the world. Now she trusted and believed that her sister had gone to realize the pleasures which are at God's right hand for evermore, and to experience how mean and contemptible are even the purest and holiest of earthly joys when compared with the unfading happiness of heaven.

Years have passed since then ; and John and his wife, matured in age and experience, looked round on their family of stalwart sons with comfort and satisfaction. Two were in London engaged in business. The eldest managed the Farm, assisted by his young cousin Frank, who had pleased his uncle by early showing a taste for farming. John's two youngest boys were apprenticed in the town, and looking forward to joining their brothers in London. Little Charlie, Lucy's eldest born, inherited his mother's delicate constitution. Patty tried, and indeed succeeded in some measure, to strengthen his health by open-air exercise and wholesome living ; but the boy possessed studious and refined habits, and, like his father, early showed his love for music. Patty, less self-confident than of old, listened to the doctor's advice, and actually paid for him to receive lessons in music. How readily and quickly he outstripped his teacher astonished Patty ; and, after a while, she and her husband decided to send him to Exeter to school. She may be pardoned for a feeling of pride when, two

years after, she stood in the cathedral, and heard his beautiful voice warbling forth the solo of the anthem, while all eyes were fixed upon the fair upturned face, the blue eyes, and the glossy brown curls, which so reminded her of her gentle sister, Lucy. "Oh, if his mother could but see him!" said Patty to herself; and then her eyes became blinded with tears, and she could look no more. There was another listener by Patty's side—one who had stood beside the dying couch of that boy's father—the Mary whose Bible had been that father's comfort. Patty, remembering her sister's wishes, had found the address, and written to Mary, offering her a situation at the Farm, principally to be nurse to Lucy's children. How readily she accepted the offer may be easily understood.

Years afterwards the writer, when very young, and while residing in the same town, has often taken little delicacies and nourishing things from the table of the friends with whom she was visiting to an old woman, the Mary of whom we have been writing. From her she heard the principal events in the lives of Patty and Lucy, which she has tried to make interesting to her readers, and, it is to be hoped, useful, in reminding them that among the dreadful characters described by St. Paul in his second epistle to Timothy, are included those "who are lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God."

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